Bishop Burnet, the author of this small volume, in the "History of his own Times, vol 1. page 372" has the following remarks.

"In the last year of his "(Lord Rochester) life, I was much "with him, & have writ a book "of what passed between him & "me: I do verily believe, he was "then so changed, that, if he had "recovered, he would have made "good all his resolutions."

On this book, mentioned by the Bishop, Dr. Johnson pro:nounces the following eulogium — that it is one

"which the critic ought to "read for its elegance, the "philosopher for its arguments, "and the saint for its piety, it "were an injury to the reader "to offer him an abridgement."

see Johnson's Life of Lord Rochester

26/3/47.

4903.c.66.

24 DE 58

SOME

PASSAGES

OF THE

LIFE AND DEATH

OF

JOHN

EARL OF ROCHESTER.

Written at his Desire, on his Death-bed, by

GILBERT BURNET, D. D.

Sometime *Professor of Divinity* in the University of *Glasgow*, and afterwards Bishop of *Sarum*.

Containing more amply their Conversations on the great Principles of NATURAL and REVEALED RELIGION.

To which is subjoined, a further Account of his CONVERSION, and Penitential Sentiments, by *Robert Parsons*, M. A. Chaplain to the Countess Dowager of *Rochester*.

GLASGOW,

PRINTED AND SOLD BY ROBERT & ANDREW FOULIS

MDCCLII.

SOME

PASSAGES

OF THE

LIFE AND DEATH

OF

JOHN

EARL OF ROCHESTER.

By GILBERT BURNET, D. D.

Chaplain in the University of Sarum.

Containing more amply their Conversations on the great Principles of NATURAL and REVEALED RELIGION.

To which is subjoined, a further Account of his Conversion, and Penitential Sentiments, by Robert Parsons, M. A. Chaplain to the Countess Dowager of Rochester.

GLASGOW,

Printed and sold by Robert Andrew Foulis

MDCCLV.

SOME PASSAGES OF THE *LIFE AND DEATH* OF JOHN EARL of ROCHESTER.

JOHN WILMOT Earl of Rocheſter was born in April, Anno Dom. 1648. his father was Henry Earl of Rocheſter, but beſt known by the title of the Lord Wilmot, who bore ſo great a part in all the late wars, that mention is often made of him in the Hiſtory; and had the chief ſhare in the honour of the preſervation of his majeſty that now reigns, after Worceſter-fight, and the conveying him from place to place, till he happily eſcaped into France; but dying before the King's return, he left his ſon little other inheritance, but the honour and title derived to him, with the pretenſions ſuch eminent ſervices gave him to the King's favour: Theſe were carefully managed by the great pru-

dence and diſcretion of his mother, a daughter of that noble and ancient family of the St. Johns of Wiltſhire, ſo that his education was carried on in all things ſuitably to his quality.

When he was at ſchool, he was an extraordinary proficient at his book; and thoſe ſhining parts which have ſince appeared with ſo much luſtre, began then to ſhew themſelves. he acquired the Latin to ſuch perfection, that, to his dying day, he retained a great reliſh of the fineneſs and beauty of that tongue; and was exactly verſed in the incomparable authors that writ about Auguſtus's time, whom he read often with that peculiar delight which the greateſt wits have ever found in thoſe ſtudies.

When he went to the univerſity, the general joy which over-ran the whole nation upon his majeſty's reſtoration, but was not regulated with that ſobriety and temperance, that became a ſerious gratitude to God for ſo great a bleſſing, produced ſome of its ill effects on him. he began to love theſe diſorders too much; his tutor was that eminent and pious divine, Dr. Blanford, afterwards promoted to the ſees of Oxford and Worceſter; and, under his inſpection, he was committed to the more immediate care of Mr. Phineas Berry, a fellow of Wadham college, a very learned and good-natured man; whom he afterwards ever uſed with much reſpect, and rewarded him as became a great man. but the humour of that time wrought ſo much on him, that he broke off the courſe of his ſtudies; to which no means could ever effectually recall him; till when he was in Italy, his governor, Dr. Bal-

four, a learned and worthy man, now a celebrated phyſician in Scotland his native country; drew him to read ſuch books, as were moſt likely to bring him back to love learning and ſtudy: and he often acknowledged to me, in particular, three days before his death, how much he was obliged to love and honour this his governor, to whom he thought he owed more than to all the world, next after his parents, for his great fidelity and care of him, while he was under his truſt. but no part of it affected him more ſenſibly, than that he engaged him by many tricks (ſo he expreſſed it) to delight in books and reading; ſo that ever after he took occaſion in the intervals of thoſe woful extravagancies that conſumed moſt of his time, to read much: and tho' the time was generally but indifferently employed, for the choice of the ſubjects of his ſtudies was not always good, yet the habitual love of knowledge, together with theſe fits of ſtudy, had much awakened his underſtanding, and prepared him for better things, when his mind ſhould be ſo far changed as to reliſh them.

He came from his travels in the 18th year of his age; and appeared at court with as great advantages as moſt ever had. he was a graceful and well-ſhap'd perſon, tall and well made, if not a little too ſlender. he was exactly well bred, and what by a modeſt behaviour natural to him, what by a civility become almoſt as natural, his converſation was eaſy and obliging. he had a ſtrange vivacity of thought, and vigour of expreſſion. his wit had a ſubtility and ſublimity both, that were ſcarce imitable. his ſtyle

was clear and ſtrong. when he uſed figures, they were very lively, and yet far enough out of the common road. he had made himſelf maſter of the ancient and modern wit, and of the modern French and Italian, as well as the Engliſh. he loved to talk and write of ſpeculative matters, and did it with ſo fine a thread, that even thoſe who hated the ſubjects that his fancy ran upon, yet could not but be charmed with his way of treating them. Boileau among the French, and Cowley among the Engliſh wits, were thoſe he admired moſt. ſometimes other mens thoughts mixed with his compoſures, but that flowed rather from the impreſſions they made on him when he read them, by which they came to return upon him as his own thoughts, than that he ſervilely copied from any. for few men ever had a bolder flight of fancy, more ſteddily governed by judgment than he had. no wonder a young man ſo made, and ſo improved, was very acceptable in a court.

Soon after his coming thither, he laid hold on the firſt occaſion that offered to ſhew his readineſs to hazard his life in the defence and ſervice of his country. in winter 1665, he went with the Earl of Sandwich to ſea, when he was ſent to ly for the Dutch Eaſt-India fleet; and was in the Revenge, commanded by Sir Thomas Tiddiman, when the attack was made on the port of Bergen in Norway, the Dutch ſhips having got into that port. it was as deſperate an attempt as ever was made. during the whole action, the Earl of Rocheſter ſhewed as brave and as reſolute a courage as was poſſible. a

perſon of honour told me, he heard the Lord Clifford, who was in the ſame ſhip, often magnify his courage at that time very highly. nor did the rigours of the ſeaſon, the hardneſs of the voyage, and the extream danger he had been in, deter him from running the like on the very next occaſion; for the ſummer following he went to ſea again, without communicating his deſign to his neareſt relations. he went aboard the ſhip commanded by Sir Edward Spragge, the day before the great ſea-fight of that year. almoſt all the volunteers that were in the ſame ſhip were killed. Mr. Middleton (brother to Sir Hugh Middleton) was ſhot in his arms. during the action, Sir Edward Spragge not being ſatisfied with the behaviour of one of the captains, could not eaſily find a perſon that would chearfully venture thro' ſo much danger, to carry his commands to that captain. this Lord offered himſelf to the ſervice, and went in a little boat thro' all the ſhot, and delivered his meſſage, and returned back to Sir Edward: which was much commended by all that ſaw it. he thought it neceſſary to begin his life with theſe demonſtrations of his courage in an element and way of fighting, which is acknowledged to be the greateſt trial of clear and undaunted valour.

He had ſo entirely laid down the intemperance that was growing on him before his travels, that, at his return, he hated nothing more. but falling into company that loved theſe exceſſes, he was, tho' not without difficulty, and by many ſteps, brought back to it again. and the natural heat of his fancy, being inflamed by wine, made him ſo extravagantly plea-

ſant, that many, to be more diverted by that humour, ſtudied to engage him deeper and deeper in intemperance; which, at length, did ſo entirely ſubdue him, that, as he told me, for five years together he was continually drunk; not all the while under the viſible effect of it, but his blood was ſo inflamed, that he was not in all that time cool enough to be perfectly maſter of himſelf. this led him to ſay and do many wild and unaccountable things. by this, he ſaid, he had broke the firm conſtitution of his health, that ſeemed ſo ſtrong, that nothing was too hard for it; and he had ſuffered ſo much in his reputation, that he almoſt deſpaired to recover it. there were two principles in his natural temper, that being heighten'd by that heat carried him to great exceſſes; a violent love of pleaſure, and a diſpoſition to extravagant mirth. the one involved him in great ſenſuality: the other led him to many odd adventures and frolicks, in which he was oft in hazard of his life; the one being the ſame irregular appetite in his mind, that the other was in his body, which made him think nothing diverting that was not extravagant. and, tho' in cold blood he was a generous and good-natured man, yet he would go far in his heats, after any thing that might turn to a jeſt or matter of diverſion. he ſaid to me, he never improved his intereſt at court, to do a premeditated miſchief to other perſons, yet he laid out his wit very freely in libels and ſatyrs, in which he had a peculiar talent of mixing his wit with his malice, and fitting both with ſuch apt words, that men were tempted to be pleaſed with them. from thence his

compoſures came to be eaſily known; for few had ſuch a way of tempering theſe together as he had: ſo that, when any thing extraordinary that way came out, as a child is fathered ſometimes by its reſemblance, ſo was it laid at his door as its parent and author.

Theſe exerciſes, in the courſe of his life, were not always equally pleaſant to him. he had often ſad intervals and ſevere reflections on them; and tho' then he had not theſe awakened in him from any deep principle of religion, yet the horror that nature raiſed in him, eſpecially in ſome ſickneſſes, made him too eaſy to receive ſome ill principles, which others endeavoured to poſſeſs him with; ſo that he was too ſoon brought to ſet himſelf to ſecure and fortify his mind againſt that, by diſpoſſeſſing it all he could of the belief or apprehenſions of religion. the licentiouſneſs of his temper, with the briſkneſs of his wit, diſpoſed him to love the converſation of thoſe who divided their time between lewd actions and irregular mirth. and ſo he came to bend his wit, and direct his ſtudies and endeavours to ſupport and ſtrengthen theſe ill principles both in himſelf and others.

An accident fell out after this, which confirmed him more in theſe courſes. when he went to ſea in the year 1665, there happened to be in the ſame ſhip with him Mr. Mountague, and another gentleman of quality, theſe two, the former eſpecially, ſeemed perſwaded that they ſhould never return into England. Mr. Mountague ſaid, he was ſure of it: the other was not ſo poſitive. the Earl of Rocheſter, and the

laſt of theſe, entered into a formal engagement, not without ceremonies of religion, that if either of them died, he ſhould appear, and give the other notice of the future ſtate, if there was any. but Mr. Mountague would not enter into the bond. when the day came that they thought to have taken the Dutch-fleet in the port of Bergen, Mr. Mountague, tho' he had ſuch a ſtrong preſage in his mind of his approaching death, yet he generouſly ſtaid all the while in the place of greateſt danger. the other gentleman ſignalized his courage in a moſt undaunted manner, till near the end of the action; when he fell on a ſudden into ſuch a trembling, that he could ſcarce ſtand: and Mr. Mountague going to him to hold him up, as they were in each others arms, a cannon-ball killed him outright, and carried away Mr. Mountague's belly, ſo that he died within an hour after. the Earl of Rocheſter told me, that theſe preſages they had in their minds made ſome impreſſion on him, that there were ſeparate beings: and that the ſoul, either by a natural ſagacity, or ſome ſecret notice communicated to it, had a ſort of divination: but that gentleman's never appearing was a great ſnare to him, during the reſt of his life. tho' when he told me this, he could not but acknowledge, it was an unreaſonable thing for him to think, that beings in another ſtate were not under ſuch laws and limits, that they could not command their own motions, but as the Supreme Power ſhould order them; and that one who had ſo corrupted the natural principles of truth, as he had, had no reaſon to expect

that ſuch an extraordinary thing ſhould be done for his conviction.

He told me of another odd preſage that one had of his approaching death in the Lady Warre, his mother-in-law's houſe: the chaplain had dream'd that ſuch a day he ſhould die, but being by all the family put out of the belief of it, he had almoſt forgot it: till the evening before at ſupper, there being thirteen at table; according to a fond conceit that one of theſe muſt ſoon die, one of the young ladies pointed to him, that he was to die. he remembring his dream fell into ſome diſorder, and the Lady Warre reproving him for his ſuperſtition, he ſaid, He was confident he was to die before morning, but he being in perfect health, it was not much minded. it was Saturday-night, and he was to preach next day. he went to his chamber and ſat up late, as appeared by the burning of his candle, and he had been preparing his notes for his ſermon, but was found dead in his bed the next morning: theſe things he ſaid made him incline to believe, the ſoul was a ſubſtance diſtinct from matter: and this often returned into his thoughts. but that which perfected his perſwaſion about it, was, that in the ſickneſs which brought him ſo near death before I firſt knew him, when his ſpirits were ſo low and ſpent, that he could not move nor ſtir, and he did not think to live an hour; he ſaid, his reaſon and judgment were ſo clear and ſtrong, that from thence he was fully perſwaded that death was not the ſpending or diſſolution of the ſoul; but only the ſeparation of it from matter. he had in that ſickneſs great remorſes

for his paſt life, but he afterwards told me, they were rather general and dark horrors, than any convictions of ſinning againſt God. he was ſorry he had lived ſo as to waſte his ſtrength ſo ſoon, or that he had brought ſuch an ill name upon himſelf, and had an agony in his mind about it, which he knew not well how to expreſs: but at ſuch times, though he complied with his friends in ſuffering divines to be ſent for, he ſaid, he had no great mind to it; and that it was but a piece of his breeding, to deſire them to pray by him, in which he joined little himſelf.

As to the Supream Being, he had always ſome impreſſion of one; and profeſſed often to me, that he had never known an entire Atheiſt, who fully believed there was no God. yet when he explained his notion of this Being, it amounted to no more than a vaſt power, that had none of the attributes of goodneſs or juſtice, we aſcribe to the Deity: theſe were his thoughts about religion, as himſelf told me. for morality, he freely own'd to me, that though he talked of it, as a fine thing, yet this was only becauſe he thought it a decent way of ſpeaking, and that as they went always in cloaths, tho' in their frolicks they would have choſen ſometimes to have gone naked, if they had not feared the people; ſo though ſome of them found it neceſſary for human life to talk of morality, yet he confeſſed they cared not for it, further than the reputation of it was neceſſary for their credit and affairs; of which he gave me many inſtances, as their profeſſing and ſwearing friendſhip, where they hated mortally; their oaths and imprecations in their addreſſes to women, which

they intended never to make good; the pleaſure they took in defaming innocent perſons, and ſpreading falſe reports of ſome, perhaps in revenge, becauſe they could not engage them to comply with their ill deſigns: the delight they had in making people quarrel; their unjuſt uſage of their creditors, and putting them off by any deceitful promiſe they could invent, that might deliver them from preſent importunity. ſo that in deteſtation of theſe courſes, he would often break forth into ſuch hard expreſſions concerning himſelf, as would be indecent for another to repeat.

Such had been his principles and practices in a courſe of many years, which had almoſt quite extinguiſh'd the natural propenſities in him to juſtice and virtue: he would often go into the country, and be for ſome months wholly employed in ſtudy, or the ſallies of his wit: which he came to direct chiefly to Satyr. and this he often defended to me, by ſaying there were ſome people that could not be kept in order, or admoniſhed but in this way. I replied, that it might be granted that a grave way of Satyr was ſometimes no improfitable way of reproof. yet they who uſed it only out of ſpite, and mixed lies with truth, ſparing nothing that might adorn their poems, or gratify their revenge, could not excuſe that way of reproach, by which the innocent often ſuffer: ſince the moſt malicious things, if wittily expreſſed, might ſtick to and blemiſh the beſt men in the world, and the malice of a libel could hardly conſiſt with the charity of an admonition. to this he anſwered, a man could not write with life, unleſs he

were heated by revenge: for to make a Satyr without reſentments, upon the cold notions of Philoſophy, was as if a man would in cold blood cut mens throats who had never offended him: and he ſaid, the lyes in theſe libels came often in as ornaments that could not be ſpared without ſpoiling the beauty of the Poem.

For his other ſtudies, they were divided between the comical and witty writings of the ancients and moderns, the Roman authors, and books of Phyſic: which the ill ſtate of health he was fallen into, made more neceſſary to himſelf; and which qualifyed him for an odd adventure, which I ſhall but juſt mention. being under an unlucky accident, which obliged him to keep out of the way; he diſguiſed himſelf, ſo that his neareſt friends could not have known him, and ſet up in Tower-ſtreet for an Italian Mountebank, where he practiſed phyſic for ſome weeks not without ſucceſs. In his latter years, he read books of hiſtory more. he took pleaſure to diſguiſe himſelf, as a Porter, or as a Beggar; ſometimes to follow ſome mean amours, which, for the variety of them he affected; at other times, meerly for diverſion, he would go about in odd ſhapes, in which he acted his part ſo naturally, that even thoſe who were on the ſecret, and ſaw him in theſe ſhapes, could perceive nothing by which he might be diſcovered.

I have now made the deſcription of his former life and principles, as fully as I thought neceſſary, to anſwer my end in writing: and yet with thoſe reſerves, that I hope I have given no juſt cauſe of of-

fence to any. I have ſaid nothing but what I had from his own mouth, and have avoided the mentioning the more particular paſſages of his life, of which he told me not a few: but ſince others were concerned in them, whoſe good only I deſign, I will ſay nothing that may either provoke or blemiſh them. it is their reformation, and not their diſgrace, I deſire. this tender conſideration of others, has made me ſuppreſs many remarkable and uſeful things he told me: but finding, that though I ſhould name none, yet I muſt at leaſt relate ſuch circumſtances, as would give too great occaſion for the Reader to conjecture concerning the perſons intended right or wrong, either of which were inconvenient enough, I have choſen to paſs them quite over. But I hope thoſe that know how much they were engaged with him in his ill courſes, will be ſomewhat touched with this tenderneſs I expreſs towards them; and be thereby the rather induced to reflect on their ways, and to conſider without prejudice or paſſion what ſenſe this noble Lord had of their caſe, when he came at laſt ſeriouſly to reflect upon his own.

I now turn to thoſe parts of this Narrative, wherein I myſelf bore ſome ſhare, and which I am to deliver upon the obſervations I made, after a long and free converſation with him for ſome months. I was not long in his company, when he told me, he ſhould treat me with more freedom than he had ever uſed to men of my profeſſion. he would conceal none of his principles from me, but lay his thoughts open without any diſguiſe; nor would he do it to maintain debate, or ſhew his wit, but plainly tell me

what ſtuck with him; and proteſted to me, that he was not ſo engaged to his old maxims, as to reſolve not to change, but that if he could be convinc'd, he would chooſe rather to be of another mind: he ſaid, he would impartially weigh what I ſhould lay before him, and tell me freely when it did convince him, and when it did not. he expreſſed this diſpoſition of mind to me in a manner ſo frank, that I could not but believe him, and be much taken with his way of diſcourſe: ſo we entered into almoſt all the parts of natural and revealed religion, and of morality. he ſeemed pleaſed, and in a great meaſure ſatisfied, with what I ſaid upon many of theſe heads: and though our freeſt converſation was when we were alone, yet upon ſeveral occaſions, other perſons were witneſſes to it. I underſtood from many hands, that my company was not diſtaſtful to him, and that the ſubjects about which we talked moſt were not unacceptable: and he expreſſed himſelf often, not ill pleaſed with many things I ſaid to him, and particularly when I viſited him in his laſt ſickneſs, ſo that I hope it may not be altogether unprofitable to publiſh the ſubſtance of thoſe matters about which we argued ſo freely, with our reaſoning upon them: and perhaps what had ſome effects on him, may be not altogether ineffectual upon others. I followed him with ſuch arguments as I ſaw were moſt likely to prevail with him: and my not urging other reaſons, proceeded not from any diſtruſt I had of their force, but from the neceſſity of uſing thoſe that were moſt proper for him. he was then in a low ſtate of health, and ſeemed to be ſlowly recovering

of a great diſeaſe: he was in the milk-diet, and apt to fall into hectical-fits; any accident weakned him, ſo that he thought he could not live long; and when he went from London, he ſaid, he believed he ſhould never come to town more. yet during his being in town he was ſo well, that he went often abroad, and had great vivacity of ſpirit. ſo that he was under no ſuch decay, as either darkned or weakned his underſtanding; nor was he any way troubled with the ſpleen, or vapours, or under the power of melancholy. what he was then, compared to what he had been formerly, I could not ſo well judge, who had ſeen him but twice before. others have told me they perceived no difference in his parts. this I mention more particularly, that it may not be thought that melancholy, or the want of ſpirits, made him more inclined to receive any impreſſions: for indeed I never diſcovered any ſuch thing in him.

Having thus opened the way to the heads of our diſcourſe, I ſhall next mention them. the three chief things we talked about, were morality, natural religion and revealed religion, chriſtianity in particular. for morality, he confeſſed he ſaw the neceſſity of it, both for the government of the world, and for the preſervation of health, life and friendſhip: and was very much aſhamed of his former practices, rather becauſe he had made himſelf a beaſt, and had brought pain and ſickneſs on his body, and had ſuffered much in his reputation, than from any deep ſenſe of a Supream Being, or another ſtate: but ſo far this went with him, that he reſolved firmly to change the courſe of his life; which he thought he

ſhould effect by the ſtudy of philoſophy, and had not a few no leſs ſolid than pleaſant notions concerning the folly and madneſs of vice: but he confeſſed he had no remorſe for his paſt actions, as offences againſt God, but only as injuries to himſelf and to mankind.

Upon this ſubject I ſhewed him the defects of philoſophy, for reforming the world: that it was a matter of ſpeculation, which but few either had the leiſure, or the capacity to enquire into. but the principle that muſt reform mankind, muſt be obvious to every man's underſtanding. that Philoſophy in matters of Morality, beyond the great lines of our duty, had no very certain fixed rule, but in the leſſer offices and inſtances of our duty, went much by the fancies of men, and cuſtoms of nations; and conſequently could not have authority enough to bear down the propenſities of nature, appetite or paſſion: for which I inſtanced in theſe two points: the one was about that maxim of the Stoicks, to extirpate all ſort of paſſion and concern for any thing. that, take it by one hand, ſeemed deſirable, becauſe if it could be accompliſhed, it would make all the accidents of life eaſie; but I think it cannot, becauſe nature after all our ſtriving againſt it, will ſtill return to itſelf: yet on the other hand it diſſolved the bonds of nature and friendſhip, and ſlackned induſtry, which will move but dully, without an inward heat: and if it delivered a man from many troubles, it deprived him of the chief pleaſures of life, which riſe from friendſhip. the other was concerning the reſtraint of pleaſure, how far that was to go. upon

this he told me the two Maxims of his Morality then were, that he ſhould do nothing to the hurt of any other, or that might prejudice his own health: and he thought that all pleaſure, when it did not interfere with theſe, was to be indulged as the gratification of our natural appetites. it ſeemed unreaſonable to imagine theſe were put into a man only to be reſtrained, or curbed to ſuch a narrowneſs: this he applied to the free uſe of wine and women.

To this I anſwered, that if appetites being natural, was an argument for the indulging them, then the revengeful might as well alledge it for murder, and the covetous for ſtealing; whoſe appetites are no leſs keen on thoſe objects; and yet it is acknowledged that theſe appetites ought to be curbed. if the difference is urged from the injury that another perſon receives, the injury is as great, if a man's wife is defiled, or his daughter corrupted: and it is impoſſible for a man to let his appetites looſe to vagrant luſts, and not to tranſgreſs in theſe particulars: ſo there was no curing the diſorders, that muſt riſe from thence, but by regulating theſe appetites: and why ſhould we not as well think that God intended our brutiſh and ſenſual appetites ſhould be governed by our reaſon, as that the fierceneſs of beaſts ſhould be managed and tamed, by the wiſdom, and for the uſe of man? ſo that it is no real abſurdity to grant that appetites were put into men, on purpoſe to exerciſe their reaſon in the reſtraint and government of them: which to be able to do, miniſters a higher and more laſting pleaſure to a man, than to give them their full ſcope and range. and if other rules of Phi-

loſophy be obſerved, ſuch as the avoiding thoſe objects that ſtir paſſion; nothing raiſes higher paſſions than ungovern'd luſt, nothing darkens the underſtanding, and depreſſes a man's mind more, nor is any thing managed with more frequent returns of other immoralities, ſuch as oaths and imprecations which are only intended to compaſs what is deſired: the expence that is neceſſary to maintain theſe irregularities makes a man falſe in his other dealings. all this he freely confeſſed was true, upon which I urged, that if it was reaſonable for a man to regulate his appetite in things which he knew were hurtful to him; was it not as reaſonable for God to preſcribe a regulating of thoſe appetites, whoſe unreſtrained courſe did produce ſuch miſchievous effects? that it could not be denied, but doing to others what we would have others do unto us, was a juſt rule: thoſe men then that knew how extream ſenſible they themſelves would be of the diſhonour of their families, in the caſe of their wives or daughters, muſt needs condemn themſelves, for doing that which they could not bear from another: and if the peace of mankind, and the entire ſatisfaction of our whole life, ought to be one of the chief meaſures of our actions, then let all the world judge, whether a man that confines his appetite, and lives contented at home, is not much happier, than thoſe that let their deſires run after forbidden objects. the thing being granted to be better in itſelf, then the queſtion falls between the reſtraint of appetite in ſome inſtances, and the freedom of a man's thoughts, the ſoundneſs of his health, his application to affairs, with the

eaſineſs of his whole life. whether the one is not to be done before the other? as to the difficulty of ſuch a reſtraint, though it is not eaſie to be done, when a man allows himſelf many liberties, in which it is not poſſible to ſtop; yet thoſe who avoid the occaſions that may kindle theſe impure flames, and keep themſelves well employed, find the victory and dominion over them no ſuch impoſſible, or hard matter, as may ſeem at firſt view. ſo that though the Philoſophy and Morality of this point were plain; yet there is not ſtrength enough in that principle to ſubdue nature, and appetite. upon this I urged, that Morality could not be a ſtrong thing, unleſs a man were determined by a law within himſelf: for if he only meaſured himſelf by decency, or the laws of the land, this would teach him only to uſe ſuch caution in his ill practices, that they ſhould not break out too viſibly; but would never carry him to an inward and univerſal probity: that virtue was of ſo complicated a nature, that unleſs a man came entirely within its diſcipline, he could not adhere ſtedfaſtly to any one precept: for vices are often made neceſſary ſupports to one another. that this cannot be done, either ſteddily, or with any ſatisfaction, unleſs the mind does inwardly comply with, and delight in the dictates of virtue: and that could not be effected, except a man's nature were internally regenerated and changed by a higher principle: till that came about, corrupt nature would be ſtrong, and philoſophy but feeble; eſpecially when it ſtruggled with ſuch appetites or paſſions as were much kindled, or deeply rooted in the conſti-

tution of ones body. this, he ſaid, ſounded to him like Enthuſiaſm, or Canting: he had no notion of it, and ſo could not underſtand it: he comprehended the dictates of reaſon and philoſophy, in which as the mind became much converſant, there would ſoon follow as he believed, a greater eaſineſs in obeying its precepts: I told him on the other hand, that all his ſpeculations of philoſophy would not ſerve him in any ſtead, to the reforming of his nature and life, till he applied himſelf to God for inward aſſiſtances. it was certain, that the impreſſions made in his reaſon governed him, as they were lively preſented to him: but theſe are ſo apt to ſlip out of our memory, and we ſo apt to turn our thoughts from them, and at ſome times the contrary impreſſions are ſo ſtrong, that, let a man ſet up a reaſoning in his mind againſt them, he finds that celebrated ſaying of the poet,

———*Video meliora proboque,*
Deteriora ſequor.———

'I ſee what is better and approve it; but follow
'what is worſe.

to be all that Philoſophy will amount to. whereas thoſe who upon ſuch occaſions apply themſelves to God, by earneſt prayer, feel a diſengagement from ſuch impreſſions, and themſelves endued with a power to reſiſt them. ſo that thoſe bonds which formerly held them, fall off.

This, he ſaid, muſt be the effect of a heat in nature; it was only the ſtrong diverſion of the thoughts,

that gave the ſeeming victory, and he did not doubt but if one could turn to a problem in Euclid, or to write a copy of verſes, it would have the ſame effect. to this I anſwered, that if ſuch methods did only divert the thoughts, there might be ſome force in what he ſaid: but if they not only drove out ſuch inclinations, but begat impreſſions contrary to them, and brought men into a new diſpoſition and habit of mind; then he muſt confeſs there was ſomewhat more than a diverſion in theſe changes, which were brought on our minds by true devotion. I added, that reaſon and experience were the things that determined our perſwaſions; that as experience without reaſon may be thought the deluſion of our fancy, ſo reaſon without experience had not ſo convincing an operation: but theſe two meeting together, muſt needs give a man all the ſatisfaction he can deſire. he could not ſay, it was unreaſonable to believe that the Supream Being might make ſome thoughts ſtir in our minds with more or leſs force, as it pleaſed: eſpecially the force of theſe motions being for the moſt part, according to the impreſſion that was made on our brains; which that Power that directed the whole frame of nature, could make grow deeper as it pleaſed. it was alſo reaſonable to ſuppoſe God a being of ſuch goodneſs that he would give his aſſiſtance to ſuch as deſired it: for though he might upon ſome greater occaſions in an extraordinary manner turn ſome peoples minds; yet ſince he had endued man with a faculty of reaſon, it is fit that men ſhould employ that, as far as they could, and beg his aſſiſtance, which certainly they

can do. all this ſeemed reaſonable, and at leaſt probable: now good men who felt upon their frequent applications to God in prayer, a freedom from thoſe ill impreſſions that formerly ſubdued them, an inward love to virtue and true goodneſs, an eaſineſs and delight in all the parts of holineſs, which was fed and cheriſhed in them by a ſerioufneſs in prayer, and did languiſh as that went off, had as real a perception of an inward ſtrength in their minds, that did riſe and fall with true devotion, as they perceived the ſtrength of their bodies increaſed or abated, according as they had or wanted good nouriſhment.

After many diſcourſes upon this ſubject, he ſtill continued to think all was the effect of fancy: he ſaid, that he underſtood nothing of it, but acknowledged that he thought they were very happy whoſe fancys were under the power of ſuch impreſſions; ſince they had ſomewhat on which their thoughts reſted and centred: but when I ſaw him in his laſt ſickneſs, he then told me, he had another ſenſe of what we had talked concerning prayer and inward aſſiſtances.

This ſubject led us to diſcourſe of God, and of the notion of religion in general. he believed there was a Supream Being: he could not think the world was made by chance, and the regular courſe of nature ſeemed to demonſtrate the eternal power of its author. this, he ſaid, he could never ſhake off; but when he came to explain his notion of the Deity, he ſaid, he looked on it as a vaſt power that wrought every thing by the neceſſity of its nature: and thought that God had none of thoſe affections

of love or hatred, which breed perturbation in us, and by conſequence he could not ſee that there was to be either reward or puniſhment. he thought our conceptions of God were ſo low, that we had better not think much of him: and to love God ſeemed to him a preſumptuous thing, and the heat of fanciful men. therefore he believed there ſhould be no other religious worſhip, but a general celebration of that Being, in ſome ſhort hymn: all the other parts of worſhip he eſteemed the inventions of prieſts, to make the world believe they had a ſecret of incenſing and appeaſing God as they pleaſed. in a word, he was neither perſwaded that there was a ſpecial providence about human affairs; nor that prayers were of much uſe, ſince that was to look on God as a weak being, that would be overcome with importunities. and for the ſtate after death, though he thought the ſoul did not diſſolve at death; yet he doubted much of rewards or puniſhments: the one he thought too high for us to attain, by our ſlight ſervices; and the other was too extream to be inflicted for ſin. this was the ſubſtance of his ſpeculations about God and religion.

I told him his notion of God was ſo low, that the Supream Being ſeemed to be nothing but nature. for if that Being had no freedom, nor choice of its own actions, nor operated by wiſdom or goodneſs, all thoſe reaſons which led him to acknowledge a God, were contrary to this conceit; for if the order of the univerſe perſwaded him to think there was a God, he muſt at the ſame time conceive him to be both wiſe and good, as well as powerful, ſince theſe

all appeared equally in the creation: though his wiſdom and goodneſs had ways of exerting themſelves, that were far beyond our notions or meaſures. if God was wiſe and good, he would naturally love, and be pleaſed with thoſe that reſembled him in theſe perfections, and diſlike thoſe that were oppoſite to him. every rational being naturally loves itſelf, and is delighted in others like itſelf, and is averſe from what is not ſo. truth is a rational nature's acting in conformity to itſelf in all things, and goodneſs is an inclination to promote the happineſs of other beings: ſo truth and goodneſs were the eſſential perfections of every reaſonable being, and certainly moſt eminently in the Deity: nor does his mercy or love raiſe paſſion or perturbation in him; for we feel that to be a weakneſs in ourſelves, which indeed only flows from our want of power, or skill to do what we wiſh or deſire: it is alſo reaſonable to believe God would aſſiſt the endeavours of the good, with ſome helps ſuitable to their nature. and that it could not be imagined, that thoſe who imitated him, ſhould not be ſpecially favoured by him: and, therefore ſince this did not appear in this ſtate, it was moſt reaſonable to think it ſhould be in another, where the rewards ſhall be an admiſſion to a more perfect ſtate of conformity to God, with the felicity that follows it, and the puniſhments ſhould be a total excluſion from him, with all the horror and darkneſs that muſt follow that. theſe ſeemed to be the natural reſults of ſuch ſeveral courſes of life, as well as the effects of Divine juſtice, rewarding or puniſhing. for ſince he believed the ſoul had a

diſtinct ſubſiſtence, ſeparated from the body; upon its diſſolution there was no reaſon to think it paſſed into a ſtate of utter oblivion, of what it had been in formerly: but that as the reflections on the good or evil it had done, muſt raiſe joy or horror in it; ſo thoſe good or ill diſpoſitions accompanying the departed ſouls, they muſt either riſe up to a higher perfection, or ſink to a more depraved, and miſerable ſtate. in this life, variety of affairs and objects do much cool and divert our minds; and are on the one hand often great temptations to the good, and give the bad ſome eaſe in their trouble; but in a ſtate wherein the ſoul ſhall be ſeparated from ſenſible things, and employed in a more quick and ſublime way of operation, this muſt very much exalt the joys and improvements of the good, and as much heighten the horror and rage of the wicked. ſo that it ſeemed a vain thing to pretend to believe a Supream Being, that is wiſe and good as well as great, and not to think a diſcrimination will be made between the good and bad, which, it is manifeſt, is not fully done in this life.

As for the government of the world, if we believe the Supream Power made it, there is no reaſon to think he does not govern it: for all that we can fancy againſt it, is the diſtraction which that infinite variety of ſecond cauſes, and the care of their concernments, muſt give to the *Firſt*, if it inſpects them all. but as among men, thoſe of weaker capacities are wholly taken up with ſome one thing, whereas thoſe of more enlarged powers can, without diſtraction, have many things within their care,

as the eye can at one view receive a great variety of objects, in that narrow compaſs, without confuſion; ſo if we conceive the Divine underſtanding to be as far above ours, as his power of creating and framing the whole univerſe, is above our limited activity, we will no more think the government of the world a diſtraction to him: and if we have once overcome this prejudice, we ſhall be ready to acknowledge a providence directing all affairs; a care well becoming the great Creator.

As for worſhipping him, if we imagine our worſhip is a thing that adds to his happineſs, or gives him ſuch a fond pleaſure as weak people have to hear themſelves commended; or that our repeated addreſſes do overcome him through our meer importunity, we have certainly very unworthy thoughts of him. the true ends of worſhip come within another conſideration: which is this, a man is never entirely reformed, till a new principle govern his thoughts: nothing makes that principle ſo ſtrong, as deep and frequent meditations of God; whoſe nature though it be far above our comprehenſion, yet his goodneſs and wiſdom are ſuch perfections as fall within our imagination: and he that thinks often of God, and conſiders him as governing the world, and as ever obſerving all his actions, will feel a very ſenſible effect of ſuch meditations, as they grow more lively and frequent with him; ſo the end of religious worſhip either public or private, is to make the apprehenſions of God have a deeper root, and a ſtronger influence on us. the frequent returns of theſe are neceſſary: leſt if we allow of too long

intervals between them, theſe impreſſions may grow feebler, and other ſuggeſtions may come in their room: and the returns of prayer are not to be conſidered as favours extorted by meer importunity, but as rewards conferred on men ſo well diſpoſed, and prepared for them: according to the promiſes that God has made for anſwering our prayers, thereby to engage and nouriſh a devout temper in us, which is the chief root of all true holineſs and virtue.

It is true, we cannot have ſuitable notions of the Divine Eſſence; as indeed we have no juſt idea of any eſſence whatſoever; ſince we commonly conſider all things, either by their outward figure, or by their effects: and from thence make inferences what their nature muſt be. ſo though we cannot frame any perfect image in our minds of the Divinity, yet we may from the diſcoveries God has made of himſelf, form ſuch conceptions of him, as may poſſeſs our minds with great reverence for him, and beget in us ſuch a love of thoſe perfections as to engage us to imitate them. for when we ſay we love God; the meaning is, we love that Being that is holy, juſt, good, wiſe; and infinitely perfect: and loving theſe attributes in that object, will certainly carry us to deſire them in ourſelves. for whatever we love in another, we naturally, according to the degree of our love, endeavour to reſemble it. in ſum, the loving and worſhipping God, though they are juſt and reaſonable returns and expreſſions of the ſenſe we have of his goodneſs to us; yet they are exacted of us not only as a tribute to God, but as a mean to beget

in us a conformity to his nature, which is the chief end of pure and undefiled religion.

If ſome men, have at ſeveral times, found out inventions to corrupt this, and cheat the world; it is nothing but what occurs in every ſort of employment, to which men betake themſelves. mountebanks corrupt phyſic; petty-foggers have entangled the matters of property, and all profeſſions have been vitiated by the knaveries of a number of their calling.

With all theſe diſcourſes he was not equally ſatisfied. he ſeemed convinced that the impreſſions of God being much in mens minds, would be a powerful means to reform the world; and did not ſeem determined againſt providence: but for the next ſtate, he thought it more likely that the ſoul began anew, and that her ſenſe of what ſhe had done in this body, lying in the figures that are made in the brain, as ſoon as ſhe diſlodged, all theſe periſhed, and that the ſoul went into ſome other ſtate to begin a new courſe. but I ſaid on this head, that this was at beſt a conjecture, raiſed in him by his fancy: for he could give no reaſon to prove it true; nor was all the remembrance our ſouls had of paſt things ſeated in ſome material figures lodged in the brain: tho' it could not be denied but a great deal of it lay in the brain. that we have many abſtracted notions and ideas of immaterial things which depend not on bodily figures: ſome ſins, ſuch as falſhood, and ill nature were ſeated in the mind, as luſt and appetite were in the body: and as the whole body was the receptacle of the ſoul, and the eyes and ears

were the organs of ſeeing and hearing, ſo was the brain the ſeat of memory: yet the power and faculty of memory, as well as of ſeeing and hearing, lay in the mind: and ſo it was no unconceivable thing that either the ſoul by its own ſtrength, or by the means of ſome ſubtiler organs, which might be fitted for it in another ſtate, ſhould ſtill remember as well as think. but indeed we know ſo little of the nature of our ſouls, that it is a vain thing for us to raiſe an hypotheſis out of the conjectures we have about it, or to reject one, becauſe of ſome difficulties that occur to us; ſince it is as hard to underſtand how we remember things now, as how we ſhall do it in another ſtate; only we are ſure we do it now, and ſo we ſhall be then, when we do it.

When I preſſed him with the ſecret joys that a good man felt, particularly as he drew near death, and the horrors of ill men, eſpecially at that time; he was willing to aſcribe it to the impreſſions they had from their education: but he often confeſſed, that whether the buſineſs of religion was true or not, he thought thoſe who had the perſwaſions of it, and lived ſo that they had quiet in their conſciences, and believed God governed the world, and acquieſced in his providence, and had the hope of an endleſs bleſſedneſs in another ſtate, the happieſt men in the world: and ſaid, he would give all that he was maſter of, to be under thoſe perſwaſions, and to have the ſupports and joys that muſt needs flow from them. I told him, the main root of all corruptions in mens principles was their ill life; which, as it darkened their minds, and diſabled them from

diſcerning better things; ſo it made it neceſſary for them to ſeek out ſuch opinions as might give them eaſe from thoſe clamours, that would otherwiſe have been raiſed within them: he did not deny but that after the doing of ſome things, he felt great and ſevere challenges within himſelf: but he ſaid, he felt not theſe after ſome others, which I would perhaps call far greater ſins than thoſe that affected him more ſenſibly. this, I ſaid, might flow from the diſorders he had caſt himſelf into, which had corrupted his judgment, and vitiated his taſte of things; and by his long continuance in, and frequent repeating of ſome immoralities, he had made them ſo familiar to him, that they were become as it were natural: and then it was no wonder if he had not ſo exact a ſenſe of what was good or evil, as a ſeveriſh-man cannot judge of taſts.

He did acknowledge the whole ſyſtem of religion, if believed, was a greater foundation of quiet than any other thing whatſoever: for all the quiet he had in his mind, was, that he could not think ſo good a Being as the Deity would make him miſerable. I asked if when by the ill courſe of his life, he had brought ſo many diſeaſes on his body, he could blame God for it, or expect that he ſhould deliver him from them by a miracle. he confeſſed there was no reaſon for that: I then urged, that if ſin ſhould caſt the mind by a natural effect, into endleſs horrors and agonies, which being ſeated in a being not ſubject to death, muſt laſt for ever, unleſs ſome miraculous power interpoſed, could he accuſe God for

that which was the effect of his own choice and ill life?

He ſaid, they were happy that believed: for it was not in every man's power.

And upon this we diſcourſed long about Revealed Religion. he ſaid, he did not underſtand that buſineſs of inſpiration. he believed the pen-men of the ſcriptures had heats and honeſty, and ſo writ; but could not comprehend how God ſhould reveal his ſecrets to mankind. why was not man made a creature more diſpoſed for religion, and better illuminated? he could not apprehend how there ſhould be any corruption in the nature of man, or a lapſe derived from Adam. God's communicating his mind to one man, was the putting it in his power to cheat the world: for propheſies and miracles, the world had been always full of ſtrange ſtories; for the boldneſs and cunning of contrivers meeting with the ſimplicity and credulity of the people, things were eaſily received; and being once received, paſſed down without contradiction. the incoherences of ſtile in the ſcriptures, the odd tranſitions, the ſeeming contradictions, chiefly about the order of time, the cruelties enjoined the Iſraelites in deſtroying the Canaanites, circumciſion, and many other rites of the Jewiſh worſhip, ſeemed to him unſuitable to the Divine Nature: and the firſt three chapters of Geneſis, he thought could not be true, unleſs they were parables. this was the ſubſtance of what he excepted to Revealed Religion in general, and to the Old Teſtament in particular.

I anſwered to all this, that believing a thing upon

the teſtimony of another, in other matters where there was no reaſon to ſuſpect the teſtimony, chiefly where it was confirmed by other circumſtances, was not only a reaſonable thing, but it was the hinge on which all the government and juſtice in the world depended: ſince all courts of juſtice proceed upon the evidence given by witneſſes; for the uſe of writing is but a thing more lately brought into the world. ſo then, if the credibility of the thing, the innocence and diſintereſtedneſs of the witneſſes, the number of them, and the publickeſt confirmations that could poſſibly be given, do concur to perſwade us of any matter of fact, it is a vain thing to ſay, becauſe it is poſſible for ſo many men to agree in a lye, that therefore theſe have done it. in all other things a man gives his aſſent when the credibility is ſtrong on the one ſide, and there appears nothing on the other ſide to balance it. ſo ſuch numbers agreeing in their teſtimony to thoſe miracles; for inſtance of our Saviour's calling Lazarus out of the grave the fourth day after he was buried, and his own riſing again after he was certainly dead; if there had been never ſo many impoſtures in the world, no man can with any reaſonable colour pretend this was one. we find both by the Jewiſh and Roman writers that lived in that time, that our Saviour was crucified; and that all his diſciples and followers believed certainly that he roſe again. they believed this upon the teſtimony of the apoſtles, and of many hundreds who ſaw it, and died confirming it: they went about to perſwade the world of it, with great zeal, tho' they knew they were to get no-

thing by it, but reproach and ſufferings; and by many wonders which they wrought, they confirmed their teſtimony. now to avoid all this, by ſaying it is poſſible this might be a contrivance, and to give no preſumption to make it ſo much as probable, that it was ſo, is in plain Engliſh to ſay, 'we are reſolved, let the evidence be what it will, 'we will not believe it.'

He ſaid, if a man ſays he cannot believe, what help is there? for he was not maſter of his own belief, and believing was at higheſt, but a probable opinion. to this I anſwered, that, if a man will let a wanton conceit poſſeſs his fancy againſt theſe things, and never conſider the evidence for religion on the other hand, but reject it upon a ſlight view of it, he ought not to ſay he cannot, but he will not believe: and while a man lives an ill courſe of life, he is not fitly qualified to examine the matter aright. let him grow calm and virtuous, and, upon due application, examine things fairly, and then let him pronounce according to his conſcience, if to take it at its loweſt, the reaſons on the one hand are not much ſtronger than they are on the other. for I found he was ſo poſſeſſed with the general conceit that a mixture of knaves and fools had made all extraordinary things be eaſily believed, that it carried him away to determine the matter, without ſo much as looking on the hiſtorical evidence for the truth of chriſtianity, which he had not enquired into, but had bent all his wit and ſtudy to the ſupport of the other ſide. as for that, that believing is at beſt but an opinion; if the evidence be but pro-

bable, it is ſo: but, if it be ſuch that it cannot be queſtioned, it grows as certain as knowledge: for we are no leſs certain, that there is a great town called Conſtantinople, the ſeat of the Ottoman empire, than that there is another called London. we as little doubt, that Queen Elizabeth once reigned, as that King Charles now reigns in England. ſo that believing may be as certain, and as little ſubject to doubting, as ſeeing or knowing.

There are two ſorts of believing Divine matters; the one is wrought in us by our comparing all the evidences of matter of fact, for the confirmation of Revealed Religion; with the propheſies in the ſcripture; where things were punctually predicted, ſome ages before their completion; not in dark and doubtful words, uttered like oracles, which might bend to any event: but in plain terms, as the foretelling that Cyrus by name ſhould ſend the Jews back from the captivity, after the fixed period of ſeventy years. the hiſtory of the Syrian and Egyptian kings, ſo punctually foretold by Daniel, and the prediction of the deſtruction of Jeruſalem, with many circumſtances relating to it, made by our Saviour; joining theſe to the excellent rule and deſign of the Scripture in matters of morality, it is at leaſt as reaſonable to believe this as any thing elſe in the world. yet ſuch a believing as this, is only a general perſwaſion in the mind, which has not that effect, till a man applying himſelf to the directions ſet down in the ſcriptures (which upon ſuch evidence cannot be denied, to be as reaſonable, as for a man to follow the preſcriptions of a learned

phyſician, and when the rules are both good and eaſy, to ſubmit to them for the recovering of his health) and by following theſe, finds a power entring with him, that frees him from the ſlavery of his appetites and paſſions; that exalts his mind above the accidents of life; and ſpreads an inward purity in his heart, from which a ſerene and calm joy ariſes within him: and good men, by the efficacy theſe methods have upon them, and from the returns of their prayers, and other endeavours, grow aſſured that theſe things are true, and anſwerable to the promiſes they find regiſtred in ſcripture. all this, he ſaid, might be fancy: but to this I anſwered, that as it were unreaſonable to tell a man that is abroad, and knows he is awake, that perhaps he is in a dream, and in his bed, and only thinks he is abroad, or that as ſome go about in their ſleep, ſo he may be aſleep ſtill: ſo good and religious men know, tho' others may be abuſed by their fancies, that they are under no ſuch deception: and find that they are neither hot nor enthuſiaſtical, but under the power of calm and clear principles. all this he ſaid he did not underſtand; and that it was to aſſert or beg the thing in queſtion, which he could not comprehend.

As for the poſſibility of revelation, it was a vain thing to deny it: for as God gives us the ſenſe of ſeeing material objects by our eyes, and opened in ſome a capacity of apprehending high and ſublime things, of which other men ſeemed utterly incapable: ſo it was a weak aſſertion, that God cannot awaken a power in ſome mens minds, to apprehend and know ſome things, in ſuch a manner, that others are not

capable of it. this is not half ſo incredible to us, as ſight is to a blind man, who yet may be convinced there is a ſtrange power of ſeeing that governs men, of which he finds himſelf deprived. as for the capacity put into ſuch mens hands to deceive the world, we are at the ſame time to conſider, that, beſides the probity of their tempers, it cannot be thought but God can ſo forcibly bind up a man in ſome things, that it ſhould not be in his power to deliver them otherwiſe than as he gives him in commiſſion. beſides, the confirmation of miracles are a divine credential to warrant ſuch perſons in what they deliver to the world, which cannot be imagined can be joined to a lye, ſince this were to put the omnipotence of God to atteſt that which no honeſt man will do. for the buſineſs of the fall of man, and other things of which we cannot perhaps give ourſelves a perfect account, we who cannot fathom the ſecrets of the counſel of God, do very unreaſonably to take on us to reject an excellent ſyſtem of good and holy rules, becauſe we cannot ſatisfy ourſelves about ſome difficulties in them. common experience tells us, there is a great diſorder in our natures, which is not eaſily rectified: all philoſophers were ſenſible of it, and every man that deſigns to govern himſelf by reaſon, feels the ſtruggle between it and nature: ſo that it is plain, there is a lapſe of the high powers of the ſoul.

But why, ſaid he, could not this be rectified by ſome plain rule given: but men muſt come and ſhew a trick to perſwade the world they ſpeak to them in the name of God? I anſwered, that religion being a

deſign to recover and ſave mankind, was to be ſo opened as to awaken and work upon all ſorts of people; and generally men of a ſimplicity of mind, were thoſe that were the fitteſt objects for God to ſhew his favour to; therefore it was neceſſary, that meſſengers ſent from heaven ſhould appear with ſuch alarming evidences as might awaken the world, and prepare them, by ſome aſtoniſhing ſigns, to liſten to the doctrine they were to deliver. philoſophy, that was only a matter of fine ſpeculation, had few votaries. and as there was no authority in it to bind the world to believe its dictates, ſo they were only received by ſome of nobler and refined natures, who could apply themſelves to, and delight in ſuch notions. but true religion was to be built on a foundation that ſhould carry more weight on it, and to have ſuch convictions, as might not only reach thoſe who were already diſpoſed to receive them, but rouſe up ſuch as without great and ſenſible excitation would have otherwiſe ſlept on in their ill courſes.

Upon this and ſome ſuch occaſions, I told him, I ſaw the ill uſe he made of his wit, by which he ſlurred the graveſt things with a ſlight daſh of his fancy; and the pleaſure he found in ſuch wanton expreſſions, as calling the doing of miracles, 'the 'ſhewing of a trick,' did really keep him from examining them, with that care which ſuch things required.

For the Old Teſtament, we are ſo remote from that time, we have ſo little knowledge of the language in which it was writ, have ſo imperfect an

account of the hiſtory of thoſe ages, know nothing of their cuſtoms, forms of ſpeech, and the ſeveral periods they might have, by which they reckoned their time, that it is rather a wonder we ſhould underſtand ſo much of it, than that many paſſages in it ſhould be ſo dark to us. the chief uſe it has to us Chriſtians, is, that from writings which the Jews acknowledge to be divinely inſpired, it is manifeſt the Meſſias was promiſed before the deſtruction of their temple; which being done long ago, and theſe propheſies agreeing to our Saviour, and to no other, here is a great confirmation given to the goſpel. but, tho' many things in theſe books could not be underſtood by us, who live above 3000 years after the chief of them were written, it is no ſuch extraordinary matter.

For that of the deſtruction of the Canaanites by the Iſraelites, it is to be conſidered, that if God had ſent a plague among them all, that could not have been found fault with. if then God had a right to take away their lives, without injuſtice or cruelty, he had a right to appoint others to do it, as well as to execute it by a more immediate way: and the taking away people by the ſword, is a much gentler way of dying, than to be ſmitten with a plague or a famine. and for the children that were innocent of their fathers faults, God could in another ſtate make that up to them. ſo all the difficulty is, why were the Iſraelites commanded to execute a thing of ſuch barbarity? but this will not ſeem ſo hard, if we conſider that this was to be no precedent for future times; ſince they did not do it but upon

ſpecial warrant and commiſſion from Heaven, evidenc'd to all the world by ſuch mighty miracles as did plainly ſhew, that they were particularly deſign'd by God to be the executioners of his juſtice. and God, by imploying them in ſo ſevere a ſervice, intended to poſſeſs them with great horror of idolatry, which was puniſhed in ſo extream a manner.

For the rites of their religion, we can ill judge of them, except we perfectly underſtood the idolatries round about them, to which we find they were much inclined; ſo they were to be bent by other rites to an extream averſion from them: and yet, by the pomp of many of their ceremonies and ſacrifices, great indulgences were given to a people naturally fond of a viſible ſplendor in religious worſhip. in all which, if we cannot deſcend to ſuch ſatisfactory anſwers in every particular, as a curious man would deſire, it is no wonder. the long interval of time, and other accidents, have worn out thoſe things which were neceſſary to give us a clearer light into the meaning of them. and for the ſtory of the creation, how far ſome things in it may be parabolical, and how far hiſtorical, has been much diſputed: there is nothing in it that may not be hiſtorically true. for, if it be acknowledged that ſpirits can form voices in the air, for which we have as good authority as for any thing in hiſtory; then it is no wonder that Eve, being ſo lately created, might be deceived, and think a ſerpent ſpake to her, when the evil ſpirit framed the voice.

But in all theſe things I told him he was in the wrong way, when he examined the buſineſs of reli-

gion by ſome dark parts of ſcripture; therefore I deſired him to conſider the whole contexture of the Chriſtian religion, the rules it gives, and the methods it preſcribes. nothing can conduce more to the peace, order and happineſs of the world, than to be governed by its rules. nothing is more for the intereſts of every man in particular: the rules of ſobriety, temperance and moderation, were the beſt preſervers of life, and, which was perhaps more, of health. humility, contempt of the vanities of the world, and the being well employed, raiſes a man's mind to a freedom from the follies and temptations that haunted the greateſt part. nothing was ſo generous and great as to ſupply the neceſſities of the poor, and to forgive injuries. nothing raiſed and maintained a man's reputation ſo much, as to be exactly juſt and merciful; kind, charitable, and compaſſionate. nothing opened the powers of a man's ſoul ſo much as a calm temper, a ſerene mind, free of paſſion and diſorders. nothing made ſocieties, families, and neighbourhoods ſo happy, as when theſe rules which the goſpel preſcribes took place, 'of doing as we would have others do to us, and 'loving our neighbours as ourſelves.'

The Chriſtian worſhip was alſo plain and ſimple; ſuitable to ſo pure a doctrine. the ceremonies of it were few and ſignificant, as the admiſſion to it by a waſhing with water, and the memorial of our Saviour's death in bread and wine; the motives in it to perſwade to this purity were ſtrong: That God ſees us, and will judge us for all our actions: That we ſhall be for ever happy or miſerable, as we paſs our

lives here: The example of our Saviour's life, and the great expreſſions of his love in dying for us, are mighty engagements to obey and imitate him. the plain way of expreſſion uſed by our Saviour and his apoſtles, ſhews there was no artifice, where there was ſo much ſimplicity uſed: there were no ſecrets kept only among the prieſts, but every thing was open to all Chriſtians: the rewards of holineſs are not entirely put over to another ſtate, but good men are ſpecially bleſt with peace in their conſciences, great joy in the confidence they have of the love of God, and of ſeeing him for ever: and often a ſignal courſe of bleſſings follows them in their whole lives: but, if at other times calamities fell on them, theſe were ſo much mitigated by the patience they were taught, and the inward aſſiſtances with which they were furniſhed, that even thoſe croſſes were converted to bleſſings.

I deſired he would lay all theſe things together, and ſee what he could except to them, to make him think this was a contrivance. intereſt appears in all human contrivances. our Saviour plainly had none. he avoided applauſe, withdrew himſelf from the offers of a crown: he ſubmitted to poverty and reproach, and much contradiction in his life, and to a moſt ignominious and painful death. his Apoſtles had none neither; they did not pretend either to power or wealth, but delivered a doctrine that muſt needs condemn them, if they ever made ſuch uſe of it: they declared their commiſſion fully, without reſerves till other times: they recorded their own weakneſs: ſome of them wrought with

their own hands; and when they received the charities of their converts, it was not ſo much to ſupply their own neceſſities, as to diſtribute to others: they knew they were to ſuffer much for giving their teſtimonies to what they had ſeen and heard, in which ſo many, in a thing ſo viſible, as Chriſt's reſurrection and aſcenſion, and the effuſion of the Holy Ghoſt which he had promiſed, could not be deceived: and they gave ſuch public confirmations of it, by the wonders they themſelves wrought, that great multitudes were converted to a doctrine, which, beſides the oppoſition it gave to luſt and paſſion, was born down and perſecuted for 300 years: and yet its force was ſuch, that it not only weathered out all thoſe ſtorms, but even grew and ſpread vaſtly under them. Pliny, about threeſcore years after, found their numbers great, and their lives innocent, and even Lucian, amidſt all his raillery, gives a high teſtimony to their charity and contempt of life, and the other virtues of the Chriſtians; which is likewiſe more than once done by malice itſelf, Julian the apoſtate.

If a man will lay all this in one ballance, and compare with it the few exceptions brought to it, he will ſoon find how ſtrong the one, and how ſlight the other are: therefore it was an improper way to begin at ſome cavils about ſome paſſages in the New Teſtament, or the Old, and from thence to pre-poſſeſs one's mind againſt the whole. the right method had been firſt to conſider the whole matter, and from ſo general a view, to deſcend to more particular enquiries: whereas they ſuffered their minds to be

foreſtalled with prejudices; ſo that they never examined the matter impartially.

To the greateſt part of this he ſeemed to aſſent, only he excepted to the belief of myſteries in the Chriſtian religion; which he thought no man could do, ſince it is not in a man's power to believe that which he cannot comprehend, and of which he can have no notion. the believing myſteries, he ſaid, made way for all the jugling of prieſts, for they getting the people under them in that point, ſet out to them what they pleaſed; and giving it a hard name, and calling it a myſtery, the people were tamed, and eaſily believed it. the reſtraining a man from the uſe of women, except one in the way of marriage, and denying the remedy of divorce, he thought unreaſonable impoſitions on the freedom of mankind: and the buſineſs of the clergy, and their maintenance, with the belief of ſome authority and power conveyed in their orders, lookt, as he thought, like a piece of contrivance: and why, ſaid he, muſt a man tell me, I cannot be ſaved, unleſs I believe things againſt my reaſon, and then that I muſt pay him for telling me of them? theſe were all the exceptions which at any time I heard from him to Chriſtianity. to which I made theſe anſwers.

For myſteries it is plain, there is in every thing ſomewhat that is unaccountable; how animals or men are formed in their mothers bellies, how ſeeds grow in the earth, how the ſoul dwells in the body, and acts and moves it; how we retain the figures of ſo many words or things in our memories, and how we draw them out ſo eaſily and orderly in our

thoughts or diſcourſes? how ſight and hearing were ſo quick and diſtinct, how we move, and how bodies were compounded and united? theſe things if we follow them into all the difficulties, that we may raiſe about them, will appear every whit as unaccountable as any myſtery of religion: and a blind or deaf man would judge ſight or hearing as incredible, as any myſtery may be judged by us: for our reaſon is not equal to them. in the ſame rank, different degrees of age or capacity, raiſe ſome far above others: ſo that children cannot fathom the learning, nor weak perſons the counſels of more illuminated minds: therefore it was no wonder if we could not underſtand the Divine Eſſence: we cannot imagine how two ſuch different natures as a ſoul and a body ſhould ſo unite together, and be mutually affected with one anothers concerns, and how the ſoul has one principle of reaſon, by which it acts intellectually, and another of life by which it joins to the body and acts vitally; two principles ſo widely differing both in their nature and operation, and yet united in one and the ſame perſon. there might be as many hard arguments brought againſt the poſſibility of theſe things, which yet every one knows to be true, from ſpeculative notions, as againſt the myſteries mentioned in the ſcriptures. as for that of the Trinity, that in one eſſence there are three different principles of operation, which, for want of terms fit to expreſs them by, we call perſons, and are called in ſcripture, The Father, Son, and Holy Ghoſt, and that the ſecond of theſe did unite himſelf in a moſt intimate manner

with the human nature of Jeſus Chriſt; and that the ſufferings he underwent, were accepted of God as a ſacrifice for our ſins; who thereupon conferred on him a power of granting eternal life to all that ſubmit to the terms on which he offers it; and that the matter of which our bodies once conſiſted, which may be as juſtly called the bodies we lay down at our deaths, as theſe can be ſaid to be the bodies which we formerly lived in, being refined and made more ſpiritual, ſhall be reunited to our ſouls, and become a fit inſtrument for them in a more perfect eſtate: and that God inwardly bends and moves our wills by ſuch impreſſions, as he can make on our bodies and minds.

Theſe, which are the chief myſteries of our religion, are neither ſo unreaſonable, that any other objection lies againſt them, but this, that they agree not with our common notions, nor ſo unaccountable, that ſomewhat like them, cannot be aſſigned in other things, which are believed really to be, though the manner of them cannot be apprehended. ſo this ought not to be any juſt objection to the ſubmiſſion of our reaſon to what we cannot ſo well conceive, provided our belief of it be well grounded. there have been too many niceties brought indeed, rather to darken than explain theſe: they have been defended by weak arguments, and illuſtrated by ſimilies not always ſo very apt and pertinent; and new ſubtilities have been added, which have rather perplexed than cleared them. all this cannot be denied; the oppoſition of Hereticks anciently, occaſioned too much curioſity among the

Fathers: which the School-men have wonderfully advanced of late times. but if myſteries were received, rather in the ſimplicity in which they are delivered in the ſcriptures, than according to the deſcantings of fanciful men upon them, they would not appear much more incredible, that ſome of the common objects of ſenſe and perception. and it is a needleſs fear, that if ſome myſteries are acknowledged, which are plainly mentioned in the New-Teſtament; it will then be in the power of the prieſts to add more at their pleaſure. for it is an abſurd inference from our being bound to aſſent to ſome truths about the Divine Eſſence, of which the manner is not underſtood, to argue that therefore in an object preſented duly to our ſenſes, ſuch as bread and wine, we ſhould be bound to believe againſt their teſtimony, that it is not what our ſenſes perceive it to be, but the whole fleſh and blood of Chriſt; an entire body being in every crumb and drop of it. it is not indeed in a man's power to believe thus againſt his ſenſe and reaſon, where the object is proportioned to them, and fitly applied, and the organs are under no indiſpoſition or diſorder. it is certain, that no myſtery is to be admitted, but upon very clear and expreſs authorities from ſcripture, which could not reaſonably be underſtood in any other ſenſe. and though a man cannot form an explicit notion of a myſtery, for then it would be no longer a myſtery, yet in general he may believe a thing to be, though he cannot give himſelf a particular account of the way of it: or rather though he cannot anſwer ſome objections which lie

againſt it. we know we believe many ſuch in human matters, which are more within our reach: and it is very unreaſonable to ſay, we may not do it in divine things, which are much more above our apprehenſions.

For the ſevere reſtraint of the uſe of women, it is hard to deny that privilege to Jeſus Chriſt as a law-giver, to lay ſuch reſtraints, as all inferior legiſlators do; who when they find the liberties their ſubjects take, prove hurtful to them, ſet ſuch limits, and make ſuch regulations, as they judge neceſſary and expedient. it cannot be ſaid, but the reſtraint of appetite is neceſſary in ſome inſtances: and if it is neceſſary in theſe, perhaps other reſtraints are no leſs neceſſary, to fortifie and ſecure them. for if it be acknowledged that men have a property in their wives and daughters, ſo that to defile the one, or corrupt the other, is an unjuſt and injurious thing; it is certain, that except a man carefully governs his appetites, he will break through theſe reſtraints: and therefore, our Saviour knowing, that nothing could ſo effectually deliver the world from the miſchief of unreſtrained appetite, as ſuch a confinement, might very reaſonably enjoyn it. and in all ſuch caſes, we are to ballance the inconveniences on both hands, and where we find they are heavieſt, we are to acknowledge the equity of the law. on the one hand there is no prejudice, but the reſtraint of appetite; on the other, are the miſchiefs of being given up to pleaſure, of running inordinately into it, of breaking the quiet of our own family at home, and of others abroad: the engaging into much paſſion,

the doing many falſe and impious things to compaſs what is deſired, the waſte of mens eſtates, time, and health. now let any man judge, whether the prejudices on this ſide, are not greater, than that ſingle one of the other ſide, of being denied ſome pleaſure? for Polygamy, it is but reaſonable, ſince women are equally concerned in the laws of marriage, that they ſhould be conſidered as well as men: but in a ſtate of Polygamy, they are under great miſery and jealouſie, and are indeed barbarouſly uſed. man being alſo of a ſociable nature, friendſhip and converſe were among the primitive intendments of marriage, in which as far as the man may excell the wife in greatneſs of mind, and height of knowledge, the wife ſomeway makes that up with her affection and tender care: ſo that from both happily mixed, there ariſes a harmony, which is to virtuous minds one of the greateſt joys of life: but all this is gone in a ſtate of Polygamy, which occaſions perpetual jarrings and jealouſies. and the variety does but engage men to a freer range of pleaſure, which is not to be put in the ballance with the far greater miſchiefs that muſt follow the other courſe. ſo that it is plain, our Saviour conſidered the nature of man, what it could bear, and what was fit for it, when he ſo reſtrained us in theſe our liberties. and for Divorce, a power to break that bond would too much encourage married perſons in the little quarrellings that may riſe between them; if it were in their power to depart one from another. for when they know that cannot be, and that they muſt live and die together, it does naturally incline them to lay

down their reſentments, and to endeavour to live as well together as they can. ſo the law of the goſpel being a law of love, deſigned to engage Chriſtians to mutual love; it was fit that all ſuch proviſions ſhould be made, as might advance and maintain it: and all ſuch liberties be taken away, as are apt to enkindle or foment ſtrife. this might fall in ſome inſtances to be uneaſy and hard enough, but laws conſider what falls out moſt commonly, and cannot provide for all particular caſes. the beſt laws are in ſome inſtances very great grievances. but the advantages being ballanced with the inconveniences, meaſures are to be taken accordingly. upon this whole matter I ſaid, that pleaſure ſtood in oppoſition to other conſiderations of great weight, and ſo the deciſion was eaſy. and ſince our Saviour offers ſo great rewards, it is but reaſonable he have a priviledge of loading theſe promiſes with ſuch conditions, as are not in themſelves grateful to our natural inclinations, for all that propoſe high rewards, have thereby a right to exact difficult performances.

To this he ſaid, we are ſure the terms are difficult, but are not ſo ſure of the rewards. upon this I told him, that we have the ſame aſſurance of the rewards, that we have of the other parts of the Chriſtian religion. we have the promiſes of God made to us by Chriſt, confirmed by many miracles: we have the earneſts of theſe, in the quiet and peace which follows a good conſcience; and in the reſurrection of him from the dead, who hath promiſed to raiſe us up. ſo that the reward is ſufficiently aſſured to

us: and there is no reaſon it ſhould be given to us, before the conditions are performed, on which the promiſes are made. it is but reaſonable that we ſhould truſt God, and do our duty, 'in hopes of 'that eternal life, which God who cannot lie, hath 'promiſed.' the difficulties are not ſo great, as thoſe which ſometimes the commoneſt concerns of life bring upon us: the learning ſome trades or ſciences, the governing our health and affairs, bring us often under as great ſtraits. ſo that it ought to be no juſt prejudice, that there are ſome things in religion that are uneaſie, ſince this is rather the effect of our corrupt natures, which are farther depraved by vitious habits, and can hardly turn to any new courſe of life, without ſome pain, than of the dictates of Chriſtianity, which are in themſelves juſt and reaſonable, and will be eaſie to us when renewed, and in a good meaſure reſtored to our primitive integrity.

As for the exceptions he had to the maintenance of the clergy, and the authority to which they pretended; if they ſtretched their deſigns too far, the goſpel did plainly reprove them for it: ſo that it was very ſuitable to that church which was ſo groſly faulty this way, to take the ſcriptures out of the hands of the people, ſince they do ſo manifeſtly diſclaim all ſuch practices. the prieſts of the true Chriſtian religion have no ſecrets among them, which the world muſt not know, but are only an order of men dedicated to God, to attend on ſacred things, who ought to be holy in a more peculiar manner, ſince they are to handle the things of God.

it was neceſſary that ſuch perſons ſhould have a due eſteem paid them, and a fit maintenance appointed for them: that ſo they might be preſerved from the contempt that follows poverty, and the diſtractions which the providing againſt it might otherways involve them in: and as in the order of the world, it was neceſſary for the ſupport of magiſtracy and government, and for preſerving its eſteem, that ſome ſtate be uſed (though it is a happineſs when great men have philoſophical minds, to deſpiſe the pageantry of it.) ſo the plentiful ſupply of the clergy, if well uſed and applied by them, will certainly turn to the advantage of religion. and if ſome men either through ambition or covetouſneſs uſed indirect means, or ſervile compliances to aſpire to ſuch dignities, and being poſſeſſed of them, applied their wealth either to luxury or vain pomp, or made great fortunes out of it for their families; theſe were perſonal failings in which the doctrine of Chriſt was not concerned.

He upon that told me plainly, there was nothing that gave him, and many others, a more ſecret encouragement in their ill ways, than, that thoſe who pretended to believe, lived ſo, that they could not be thought to be in earneſt, when they ſaid it: for he was ſure religion was either a meer contrivance, or the moſt important thing that could be: ſo that if he once believed, he would ſet himſelf in great earneſt to live ſuitably to it. the aſpirings that he had obſerved at court, of ſome of the clergy, with the ſervile ways they took to attain to preferment, and the animoſities among thoſe of ſeveral parties, about

trifles, made him often think they ſuſpected the things were not true, which in their ſermons and diſcourſes they ſo earneſtly recommended. of this he had gathered many inſtances; I knew ſome of them were miſtakes and calumnies; yet I could not deny but ſomething of them might be too true: and I publiſh this the more freely, to put all that pretend to religion, chiefly thoſe that are dedicated to holy functions, in mind of the great obligation that lies on them to live ſuitably to their profeſſion: ſince otherwiſe a great deal of the irreligion and Atheiſm that is among us, may too juſtly be charged on them: for wicked men are delighted out of meaſure when they diſcover ill things in them, and conclude from thence not only that they are hypocrites, but that religion itſelf is a cheat.

But I ſaid to him upon this head, that though no good man could continue in the practice of any known ſin, yet ſuch might, by the violence or ſurprize of a temptation, to which they are liable as much as others, be of a ſudden overcome to do an ill thing, to their great grief all their life after. and then it was a very unjuſt inference, upon ſome few failings, to conclude that ſuch men do not believe themſelves. but how bad ſoever many are, it cannot be denied but there are alſo many both of the clergy and laity, who give great and real demonſtrations of the power religion has over them; in their contempt of the world, the ſtrictneſs of their lives, their readineſs to forgive injuries, to relieve the poor, and to do good on all occaſions; and yet even theſe may have their failings, either in ſuch things wherein

their conſtitutions are weak, or their temptations ſtrong and ſudden: and in all ſuch caſes we are to judge of men, rather by the courſe of their lives, than by the errors, that they through infirmity or ſurprize may have ſlipt into.

Theſe were the chief heads we diſcourſed on; and as far as I can remember, I have faithfully repeated the ſubſtance of our arguments: I have not concealed the ſtrongeſt things he ſaid to me, but though I have not enlarged on all the excurſions of his wit in ſetting them off, yet I have given them their full ſtrength, as he expreſſed them; and as far as I could recollect, have uſed his own words: ſo that I am afraid ſome may cenſure me for ſetting down theſe things ſo largely, which impious men may make an ill uſe of, and gather together to encourage and defend themſelves in their vices: but if they will compare them with the anſwers made to them, and the ſenſe that ſo great and refined a wit had of them afterwards, I hope they may through the bleſſing of God be not altogether ineffectual.

The iſſue of all our diſcourſes was this, he told me, he ſaw vice and impiety were as contrary to human ſociety, as wild beaſts let looſe would be; and therefore he firmly reſolved to change the whole method of his life: to become ſtrictly juſt and true, to be chaſt and temperate, to forbear ſwearing and irreligious diſcourſe, to worſhip and pray to his Maker: and that though he was not arrived at a full perſwaſion of Chriſtianity, he would never imploy his wit more to run it down, or to corrupt others.

Of which I have ſince a further aſſurance, from a

perſon of quality, who converſed much with him, the laſt year of his life; to whom he would often ſay, that he was happy, if he did believe, and that he would never endeavour to draw him from it.

To all this I anſwered, that a virtuous life would be very uneaſie to him, unleſs vicious inclinations were removed: it would otherwiſe be a perpetual conſtraint. nor could it be effected without an inward principle to change him; and that was only to be had by applying himſelf to God for it in frequent and earneſt prayers: and I was ſure if his mind were once cleared of theſe diſorders, and cured of thoſe diſtempers, which vice brought on it, ſo great an underſtanding would ſoon ſee through all thoſe ſlights of wit, that do feed Atheiſm and irreligion; which have a falſe glittering in them, that dazle ſome weak-ſighted minds, who have not capacity enough to penetrate further than the ſurfaces of things; and ſo they ſtick in theſe toils, which the ſtrength of his mind would ſoon break through, if it were once freed from thoſe things that depreſſed and darkened it.

At this paſs he was when he went from London, about the beginning of April. he had not been long in the country when he thought he was ſo well, that being to go to his eſtate in Somerſetſhire he rode thither poſt. this heat and violent motion did ſo inflame an ulcer, that was in his bladder, that it raiſed a very great pain in thoſe parts: yet he with much difficulty came back by coach to the lodge at Woodſtock-Park. he was then wounded both in body and mind: he underſtood phyſic and his own

conſtitution and diſtemper ſo well, that he concluded he could hardly recover: for the ulcer broke, and vaſt quantities of purulent matter paſt with his urine. but now the hand of God touched him, and as he told me, it was not only a general dark melancholy over his mind, ſuch as he had formerly felt; but a moſt penetrating cutting ſorrow: ſo that tho' in his body he ſuffered extream pain for ſome weeks, yet the agonies of his mind ſometimes ſwallowed up the ſenſe of what he felt in his body. he told me, and gave it me in charge, to tell it to one for whom he was much concerned, that tho' there were nothing to come after this life, yet all the pleaſures he had ever known in ſin, were not worth that torture he had felt in his mind. he conſidered, he had not only neglected and diſhonoured, but had openly defied his Maker, and had drawn many others into the like impieties: ſo that he looked on himſelf as one that was in great danger of being damned. he then ſet himſelf wholly to turn to God unfeignedly, and to do all that was poſſible in that little remainder of his life which was before him, to redeem thoſe great portions of it, that he had formerly ſo ill employed. the miniſter that attended conſtantly on him, was that good and worthy man Mr. Parſons, his mother's chaplain, who hath ſince his death preached, according to the directions he received from him, his funeral ſermon: in which there are ſo many remarkable paſſages, that I ſhall refer my reader to them, and will repeat none of them here, that I may not thereby leſſen his deſire to edifie himſelf by that excellent diſcourſe, which has

given ſo great and ſo general a ſatisfaction to all good and judicious readers. I ſhall ſpeak curſorily of every thing, but that which I had immediately from himſelf. he was viſited every week of his ſickneſs by his Dioceſan, that truly primitive prelate, the Lord Biſhop of Oxford; who tho' he lived ſix miles from him, yet looked on this as ſo important a piece of his paſtoral care, that he went often to him, and treated him with that decent plainneſs and freedom which is ſo natural to him; and took care alſo that he might not on terms more eaſie than ſafe, be at peace with himſelf. Dr. Marſhall the learned and worthy rector of Lincoln-college in Oxford, being the miniſter of the pariſh, was alſo frequently with him: and by theſe helps he was ſo directed and ſupported, that he might not on the one hand ſatisfie himſelf with too ſuperficial a repentance, nor on the other hand be out of meaſure oppreſſed with a ſorrow without hope. aſſoon as I heard he was ill, but yet in ſuch a condition that I might write to him, I wrote a letter to the beſt purpoſe I could. he ordered one that was then with him, to aſſure me it was very welcome to him: but not ſatisfied with that, he ſent me an anſwer, which, as the Counteſs of Rocheſter his mother told me, he dictated every word, and then ſigned it. I was once unwilling to have publiſhed it, becauſe of a complement in it to myſelf, far above my merit, and not very well ſuiting with his condition.

But the ſenſe he expreſſes in it of the change then wrought on him, hath upon ſecond thoughts pre-

vailed with me to publiſh it, leaving out what concerns myſelf.

Woodſtock Park. June 25, 1680. *Oxfordſhire.*

My moſt Honoured Dr. Burnet,

'MY ſpirits and body decay ſo equally together, 'that I ſhall write you a letter as weak as I 'am in perſon. I begin to value church-men above 'all men in the world, &c. if God be yet pleaſed 'to ſpare me longer in this world, I hope in your 'converſation to be exalted to that degree of piety, 'that the world may ſee how much I abhor what I 'ſo long loved, and how much I glory in repen-'tance, and in God's ſervice. beſtow your prayers 'upon me, that God would ſpare me (if it be his 'good will) to ſhew a true repentance and amend-'ment of life for the time to come: or elſe if the 'Lord pleaſeth to put an end to my worldly being 'now, that he would mercifully accept of my death-'bed-repentance, and perform that promiſe that he 'hath been pleaſed to make, "that at what time "ſoever a ſinner doth repent, he would receive him." 'put up theſe prayers, moſt dear doctor, to Almigh-'ty God for your moſt obedient and languiſhing 'Servant.'

ROCHESTER.

He told me when I ſaw him, that he hoped I would come to him upon that general inſinuation of the deſire he had of my company; and he was loth to write more plainly: not knowing whether I could eaſily ſpare ſo much time. I told him, that on the other hand, I looked on it as a preſumption to come ſo far, when he was in ſuch excellent hands; and though perhaps the freedom formerly between us, might have excuſed it with thoſe to whom it was known; yet it might have the appearance of ſo much vanity, to ſuch as were ſtrangers to it; ſo that till I received his letter, I did not think it convenient to come to him: and then not hearing that there was any danger of a ſudden change, I delayed going to him till the twentieth of July. at my coming to his houſe an accident fell out not worth mentioning, but that ſome have made a ſtory of it. his ſervant, being a French-man, carried up my name wrong, ſo that he miſtook it for another, who had ſent to him, that he would undertake his cure, and he being reſolved not to meddle with him, did not care to ſee him: this miſtake laſted ſome hours, with which I was the better contented, becauſe he was not then in ſuch a condition, that my being about him could have been of any uſe to him: for that night was like to have been his laſt, he had a Convulſion-fit, and raved; but opiates being given him, after ſome hours reſt, his raving left him ſo entirely, that it never again returned to him.

I cannot eaſily expreſs the tranſport he was in, when he awoke and ſaw me by him: he brake out in the tendereſt expreſſions concerning my kindneſs

in coming ſo far to ſee ſuch a one, uſing terms of great abhorrence concerning himſelf, which I forbear to relate. he told me, as his ſtrength ſerved him at ſeveral ſnatches, for he was then ſo low, that he could not hold up diſcourſe long at once, what ſenſe he had of his paſt life; what ſad apprehenſion for having ſo offended his Maker, and diſhonoured his Redeemer: what horrours he had gone through, and how much his mind was turned to call on God, and on his crucified Saviour: ſo that he hoped he ſhould obtain mercy, for he believed he had ſincerely repented; and had now a calm in his mind after that ſtorm that he had been in for ſome weeks. he had ſtrong apprehenſions and perſwaſions of his admittance to heaven: of which he ſpake once not without ſome extraordinary emotion. it was indeed the only time that he ſpake with any great warmth to me: for his ſpirits were then low, and ſo far ſpent, that though thoſe about him told me, he had expreſſed formerly great fervor in his devotions; yet nature was ſo much ſunk, that theſe were in a great meaſure fallen off. but he made me pray often with him; and ſpoke of his converſion to God as a thing now grown up in him to a ſettled and calm ſerenity. he was very anxious to know my opinion of a death-bed-repentance. I told him, that before I gave any reſolution in that, it would be convenient that I ſhould be acquainted more particularly with the circumſtances and progreſs of his repentance.

Upon this he ſatisfied me in many particulars. he ſaid, he was now perſwaded both of the truth of

Chriſtianity, and of the power of inward grace, of which he gave me this ſtrange account. he ſaid, Mr. Parſons in order to his conviction; read to him the 53 Chapter of the propheſie of Iſaiah, and compared that with the hiſtory of our Saviour's paſſion, that he might there ſee a propheſie concerning it, written many ages before it was done; which the Jews that blaſphemed Jeſus Chriſt ſtill kept in their hands, as a book divinely inſpired. he ſaid to me, 'that as he heard it read, he felt an inward force upon him, which did ſo enlighten his mind, and convince him, that he could reſiſt it no longer: for the words had an authority which did ſhoot like raies or beams in his mind; ſo that he was not only convinced by the reaſonings he had about it, which ſatisfied his underſtanding, but by a power which did ſo effectually conſtrain him, that he did ever after as firmly believe in his Saviour, as if he had ſeen him in the clouds.' he had made it be read ſo often to him, that he had got it by heart: and went through a great part of it in diſcourſe with me, with a ſort of heavenly pleaſure, giving me his reflections on it. ſome few I remember, Verſ. 1. *Who hath believed our report?* 'here,' he ſaid, 'was foretold the oppoſition the goſpel was to meet with from ſuch wretches as he was.' Verſ. 2. *he hath no form nor comelineſs, and when we ſhall ſee him, there is no beauty that we ſhould deſire him*, on this he ſaid, 'the meanneſs of his appearance and perſon has made vain and fooliſh people diſparage him, becauſe he came not in ſuch a fools-coat as they delight in.' what he ſaid on the other parts

I do not well remember: and indeed I was ſo affected with what he ſaid then to me, that the general tranſport I was under during the whole diſcourſe, made me leſs capable to remember theſe particulars, as I wiſh I had done.

He told me, that he had thereupon received the ſacrament with great ſatisfaction, and that was encreaſed by the pleaſure he had in his lady's receiving it with him: who had been for ſome years miſled in the communion of the church of Rome, and he himſelf had been not a little inſtrumental in procuring it, as he freely acknowledged. ſo that it was one of the joyfulleſt things that befel him in his ſickneſs, that he had ſeen that miſchief removed, in which he had ſo great a hand: and during his whole ſickneſs, he expreſſed ſo much tenderneſs and true kindneſs to his lady, that as it eaſily defaced the remembrance of every thing wherein he had been in fault formerly, ſo it drew from her the moſt paſſionate care and concern for him that was poſſible: which indeed deſerves a higher character than is decent to give of a perſon yet alive. but I ſhall confine my diſcourſe to the dead.

He told me, he had overcome all his reſentments to all the world; ſo that he bore ill will to no perſon, nor hated any upon perſonal accounts. he had given a true ſtate of his debts, and had ordered to pay them all, as far as his eſtate that was not ſettled, could go: and was confident that if all that was owing to him were paid to his executors, his creditors would be all ſatisfied. he ſaid, he found his mind now poſſeſſed with another ſenſe of things,

than ever he had formerly: he did not repine under all his pain, and in one of the ſharpeſt fits he was under while I was with him; he ſaid, 'he did wil-'lingly ſubmit;' and looking up to heaven, ſaid, 'God's holy will be done, I bleſs him for all he does 'to me.' he profeſſed he was contented either to die or live, as ſhould pleaſe God. and though it was a fooliſh thing for a man to pretend to chooſe, whether he would die or live, yet he wiſhed rather to die. he knew he could never be ſo well, that life ſhould be comfortable to him. he was confident he ſhould be happy if he died, but he feared if he lived he might relapſe: and then ſaid he to me, 'in 'what a condition ſhall I be, if I relapſe after all 'this? but, *he ſaid*, he truſted in the grace and good-'neſs of God, and was reſolved to avoid all thoſe 'temptations, and that courſe of life, and company, 'that was likely to enſnare him: and he deſired to 'live on no other account, but that he might by the 'change of his manners ſome way take off the high 'ſcandal his former behaviour had given.' all theſe things at ſeveral times I had from him, beſides ſome meſſages which very well became a dying penitent to ſome of his former friends, and a charge to publiſh any thing concerning him, that might be a mean to reclaim others. 'praying God, that as his life had 'done much hurt, ſo his death might do ſome good.'

Having underſtood all theſe things from him, and being preſſed to give him my opinion plainly about his eternal ſtate; I told him, that though the promiſes of the goſpel did all depend upon a real change of heart and life, as the indiſpenſable con-

dition upon which they were made; and that it was ſcarce poſſible to know certainly whether our hearts are changed, unleſs it appeared in our lives; and the repentance of moſt dying-men, being like the howlings of condemned priſoners for pardon, which flowed from no ſenſe of their crimes, but from the horrour of approaching death; there was little reaſon to encourage any to hope much from ſuch ſorrowing: yet certainly if the mind of a ſinner, even on a death-bed, be truly renewed and turned to God, ſo great is his mercy, that he will receive him, even in that extremity. he ſaid, 'he was ſure his mind 'was entirely turned, and though horrour had given 'him his firſt awaking, yet that was now grown 'up into a ſettled faith and converſion.'

There is but one prejudice lies againſt all this, to defeat the good ends of divine providence by it upon others, as well as on himſelf: and that is that it was a part of his diſeaſe, and that the lowneſs of his ſpirits made ſuch an alteration in him, that he was not what he had formerly been: and this ſome have carried ſo far as to ſay, that he died mad: theſe reports are raiſed by thoſe who are unwilling that the laſt thoughts or words of a perſon, every way ſo extraordinary, ſhould have any effect either on themſelves or others: and it is to be feared that ſome may have ſo far ſeared their conſciences, and exceeded the common meaſures of ſin and infidelity, that neither this teſtimony, nor one coming from the dead, would ſignifie much towards their conviction. that this Lord was either mad or ſtupid, is a thing ſo notoriouſly untrue, that it is the greateſt

impudence for any that were about him, to report it; and a very unreaſonable credulity in others to believe it. all the while I was with him, after he had ſlept out the diſorders of the fit he was in the firſt night, he was not only without ravings; but had a clearneſs in his thoughts, in his memory, in his reflections on things and perſons, far beyond what I ever ſaw in a perſon ſo low in his ſtrength. he was not able to hold out long in diſcourſe, for his ſpirits failed: but once for half an hour, and often for a quarter of an hour, after he awakened, he had a vivacity in his diſcourſe that was extraordinary, and in all things like himſelf. he called often for his children, his ſon the now Earl of Rocheſter, and his three daughters, and ſpake to them with a ſenſe and feeling that cannot be expreſſed in writing. he called me once to look on them all, and ſaid, 'ſee 'how good God has been to me, in giving me ſo many 'bleſſings, and I have carried myſelf to him like an 'ungracious and unthankful dog.' he once talked a great deal to me of public affairs, and of many perſons and things, with the ſame clearneſs of thought and expreſſion, that he had ever done before. ſo that by no ſign, but his weakneſs of body, and giving over diſcourſe ſo ſoon, could I perceive a difference between what his parts formerly were, and what they were then.

And that wherein the preſence of his mind appeared moſt, was in the total change of an ill habit grown ſo much upon him, that he could hardly govern himſelf, when he was any ways heated, three minutes without falling into it; I mean ſwearing.

he had acknowledged to me the former winter, that he abhorred it as a baſe and indecent thing, and had ſet himſelf much to break it off; but he confeſſed, that he was ſo over-powered by that ill cuſtom, that he could not ſpeak with any warmth, without repeated oaths, which, upon any ſort of provocation, came almoſt naturally from him: but in his laſt remorſes this did ſo ſenſibly affect him, that, by a reſolute and conſtant watchfulneſs, the habit of it was perfectly maſtered; ſo that, upon the returns of pain which were very ſevere and frequent upon him the laſt day I was with him, or upon ſuch diſpleaſures as people ſick or in pain are apt to take of a ſudden at thoſe about them: on all theſe occaſions he never ſwore an oath all the while I was there.

Once he was offended with the delay of one that he thought made not haſte enough, with ſomewhat he called for, and ſaid in a little heat, 'that damned 'fellow.' ſoon after, I told him, I was glad to find his ſtyle ſo reformed, and that he had ſo entirely overcome that ill habit of ſwearing; only that word of calling any damned, which had returned upon him, was not decent. his anſwer was, 'oh that 'language of fiends, which was ſo familiar to me, 'hangs yet about me; ſure none has deſerved more 'to be damned than I have done.' and after he had humbly asked God pardon for it, he deſired me to call the perſon to him, that he might ask him forgiveneſs: but I told him that was needleſs; for he had ſaid it of one that did not hear it, and ſo could not be offended by it.

In this diſpoſition of mind did he continue all the while I was with him, four days together. he was then brought ſo low, that all hope of recovery was gone. much purulent matter came from him with his urine, which he paſſed always with ſome pain; but one day with unexpreſſible torment: yet he bore it decently, without breaking out into repinings, or impatient complaints. he imagined he had a ſtone in his paſſage, but it being ſearched, none was found. the whole ſubſtance of his body was drained by the ulcer, and nothing was left but skin and bone; and by lying much on his back, the parts there began to mortify. but he had been formerly ſo low, that he ſeemed as much paſt all hopes of life as now; which made him one morning, after a full and ſweet night's reſt procured by Laudanum, given him without his knowledge, to fancy it was an effort of nature, and to begin to entertain ſome hopes of recovery: for he ſaid, he felt himſelf perfectly well, and that he had nothing ailing him, but an extream weakneſs, which might go off in time; and then he entertained me with the ſcheme he had laid down for the reſt of his life, how retired, how ſtrict, and how ſtudious he intended to be. but this was ſoon over; for he quickly felt that it was only the effect of a good ſleep, and that he was ſtill in a very deſperate ſtate.

I thought to have left him on Friday; but not without ſome paſſion, he deſired me to ſtay that day. there appeared no ſymptome of preſent death; and a worthy phyſician then with him, told me, that tho' he was ſo low that an accident might carry him

away on a ſudden; yet without that, he thought he might live yet ſome weeks. ſo, on Saturday at four of the clock in the morning, I left him, being the 24th of July. But I durſt not take leave of him; for he had expreſſed ſo great an unwillingneſs to part with me the day before, that if I had not preſently yielded to one day's ſtay, it was like to have given him ſome trouble; therefore I thought it better to leave him without any formality. ſome hours after, he asked for me; and when it was told him, I was gone, he ſeemed to be troubled, and ſaid, 'has my friend left me? then I ſhall die ſhortly.' after that he ſpake but once or twice till he died: he lay much ſilent. once they heard him praying very devoutly: and on Monday about two of the clock in the morning, he died, without any convulſion, or ſo much as a groan.

Lord Rochester died July 26. 1680.

THE CONCLUSION.

THUS he lived, and thus he died in the three and thirtieth year of his age. nature had fitted him for great things, and his knowledge and obſervation qualified him to have been one of the moſt extraordinary men, not only of his nation, but of the age he lived in. and I do verily believe, that if God had thought fit to have continued him longer in the world, he had been the wonder and delight of all that knew him. but the infinitely wiſe God knew better what was fit for him, and what the age deſerved. for men who have ſo caſt off all ſenſe of God and religion, deſerve not ſo ſignal a bleſſing, as the example and conviction which the reſt of his life might have given them. and I am apt to think, that the Divine goodneſs took pity on him, and ſeeing the ſincerity of his repentance, would try and venture him no more in circumſtances of temptation, perhaps too hard for human frailty. now he is at reſt, and I am very confident enjoys the fruits of his late, but ſincere repentance. but ſuch as live, and ſtill go on in their ſins and impieties, and will not be awakened neither by this, nor the other alarms that are about their ears, are, it ſeems, given up by God to a judicial hardneſs and impenitency.

Here is a public inſtance of one who lived of their ſide, but could not die of it: and though none of all

our libertines underſtood better than he, the ſecret myſteries of ſin, had more ſtudied every thing that could ſupport a man in it, and had more reſiſted all external means of conviction than he had done; yet when the hand of God inwardly touched him, he could no longer 'kick againſt thoſe pricks, but 'humbled himſelf under that mighty hand,' and as he uſed often to ſay in his prayers, 'he who had ſo 'often denied him, found then no other ſhelter, but 'his mercies, and compaſſions.'

I have written this account with all the tenderneſs and caution I could uſe, and in whatſoever I may have failed, I have been ſtrict in the truth of what I have related, remembring that of Job, 'will 'ye lie for God?' religion has ſtrength and evidence enough in itſelf, and needs no ſupport from lies, and made ſtories. I do not pretend to have given the formal words that he ſaid, though I have done that where I could remember them. But I have written them with the ſame ſincerity, that I would have done, had I known I had been to die immediately after I had finiſhed it. I did not take notes of our diſcourſe laſt winter after we parted; ſo I may have perhaps in the ſetting out of my anſwers to him, have enlarged on ſeveral things, both more fully and more regularly, than I could ſay them in ſuch free diſcourſes as we had. I am not ſo ſure of all I ſet down as ſaid by me, as I am of all ſaid by him to me; but yet the ſubſtance of the greateſt part, even of that, is the ſame.

It remains that I humbly and earneſtly beſeech all that ſhall take this book in their hands, that they

will conſider it entirely; and not wreſt ſome parts to an ill intention. God, the ſearcher of hearts, knows with what fidelity I have writ it: but if any will drink up only the poiſon that may be in it, without taking alſo the antidote here given to thoſe ill principles; or conſidering the ſenſe that this great perſon had of them, when he reflected ſeriouſly on them; and will rather confirm themſelves in their ill ways, by the ſcruples and objections which I ſet down, than be edified by the other parts of it; as I will look on it as a great infelicity, that I ſhould have ſaid any thing that may ſtrengthen them in their impieties; ſo the ſincerity of my intentions will, I doubt not, excuſe me at his hands, to whom I offer up this ſmall ſervice.

I have now performed in the beſt manner I could, what was left on me by this noble Lord, and have done with the part of an hiſtorian. I ſhall in the next place ſay ſomewhat as a divine. ſo extraordinary a text does always force a ſermon, though it is plain enough itſelf, and ſpeaks with ſo loud a voice, that thoſe who are not awakened by it, will perhaps conſider nothing that I can ſay. if our libertines will become ſo far ſober as to examine their former courſe of life, with that diſingagement and impartiality, which they muſt acknowledge a wiſe man ought to uſe in things of greateſt conſequence, and ballance the account of what they have got by their debaucheries, with the miſchiefs they have brought on themſelves and others by them, they will ſoon ſee what a mad bargain they have made. ſome diverſion, mirth and pleaſure is all they can promiſe

themſelves; but to obtain this, how many evils are they to ſuffer? how have many waſted their ſtrength, brought many diſeaſes on their bodies, and precipitated their age in the purſuit of thoſe things? and as they bring old age early on themſelves, ſo it becomes a miſerable ſtate of life to the greateſt part of them; gouts, ſtranguries, and other infirmities, being ſevere reckonings for their paſt follies; not to mention the more loathſome diſeaſes, with their no leſs loathſome and troubleſome cures, which they muſt often go through, who deliver themſelves up to forbidden pleaſure. many are disfigured beſide, with the marks of their intemperance and lewdneſs, and which is yet ſadder, an infection is derived oftentimes on their innocent, but unhappy iſſue, who being deſcended from ſo vitiated an original, ſuffer for their exceſſes. their fortunes are profuſely waſted, both by their neglect of their affairs, they being ſo buried in vice, that they cannot employ either their time or ſpirits; ſo much exhauſted by intemperance, to conſider them; and by that prodigal expence which their luſts put them upon. they ſuffer no leſs in their credit, the chief mean to recover an entangled eſtate; for that irregular expence forceth them to ſo many mean ſhifts, makes them ſo often falſe to all their promiſes and reſolutions, that they muſt needs feel how much they have loſt, that which a gentleman, and men of ingenuous tempers do ſometimes prefer even to life itſelf, their honour and reputation. nor do they ſuffer leſs in the nobler powers of their minds, which by a long courſe of ſuch diſſolute practices come to ſink and degenerate

ſo far, that not a few, whoſe firſt bloſſoms gave the moſt promiſing hopes, have ſo withered, as to become incapable of great and generous undertakings, and to be diſabled to every thing, but to wallow like ſwine in the filth of ſenſuality, their ſpirits being diſſipated, and their minds ſo nummed, as to be wholly unfit for buſineſs, and even indiſpoſed to think.

That this dear price ſhould be paid for a little wild mirth, or groſs or corporal pleaſure, is a thing of ſuch unparallelled folly, that if there were not too many ſuch inſtances before us, it might ſeem incredible. to all this we muſt add the horrors that their ill actions raiſe in them, and the hard ſhifts they are put to to ſtave off theſe, either by being perpetually drunk or mad, or by an habitual diſuſe of thinking and reflecting on their actions, and (if theſe arts will not perfectly quiet them) by taking ſanctuary in ſuch atheiſtical principles, as may at leaſt mitigate the ſowrneſs of their thoughts, though they cannot abſolutely ſettle their minds.

If the ſtate of mankind and human ſocieties are conſidered, what miſchiefs can be equal to thoſe which follow theſe courſes? ſuch perſons are a plague where-ever they come; they can neither be truſted nor be loved, having caſt off both truth and goodneſs, which procure confidence and attract love: they corrupt ſome by their ill practices, and do irreparable injuries to the reſt; they run great hazards, and put themſelves to much trouble, and all this to do what is in their power to make damnation as ſure to themſelves as poſſibly they can.

what influence this has on the whole nation is but too viſible; how the bonds of nature, wedlock, and all other relations are quite broken. virtue is thought an antick piece of formality, and religion the effect of cowardiſe or knavery: theſe are the men that would reform the world, by bringing it under a new ſyſtem of intellectual and moral principles. but bate them a few bold and lewd jeſts, what have they ever done, or deſigned to do, to make them be remembred, except it be with deteſtation? they are the ſcorn of the preſent age, and their names muſt rot in the next. here they have before them an inſtance of one who was deeply corrupted with the contagion which he firſt derived from others, but unhappily heightened it much himſelf. he was a maſter indeed, and not a bare trifler with wit, as ſome of theſe are who repeat, and that but ſcurvily, what they have heard from him or ſome others, and with impudence and laughter will face the world down, as if it were to teach it wiſdom; who, God knows, cannot follow one thought a ſtep further than as they have conned it; and take from them their borrowed wit and their mimical humour, and they will preſently appear what they indeed are, the leaſt and loweſt of men.

If they will, or if they can think a little, I wiſh they would conſider, that by their own principles, they cannot be ſure, that religion is only a contrivance. all they pretend to is only to weaken ſome arguments that are brought for it: but they have not brow enough to ſay, they can prove that their own principles are true. ſo that at moſt they bring

their cauſe no higher, than that it is poſſible Religion may not be true. but ſtill it is poſſible it may be true, and they have no ſhame left that will deny that it is alſo probable it may be true; and if ſo, then what mad men are they who run ſo great a hazard for nothing? by their own confeſſion, it may be, there is a God, a judgment, and a life to come; and if ſo, then he that believes theſe things, and lives according to them, as he enjoys a long courſe of health and quiet of mind, an innocent reliſh of many true pleaſures, and the ſerenities which virtue raiſes in him, with the good-will and friendſhip which it procures him from others; ſo when he dies, if theſe things prove miſtakes, he does not outlive his error, nor ſhall it afterwards raiſe trouble or diſquiet in him, if he then ceaſes to be: but if theſe things be true, he ſhall be infinitely happy in that ſtate, where his preſent ſmall ſervices ſhall be ſo exceſſively rewarded. the Libertines on the other ſide, as they know they muſt die, ſo the thoughts of death muſt be always melancholy to them; they can have no pleaſant view of that which yet they know cannot be very far from them: the leaſt painful idea they can have of it is, that it is an extinction and ceaſing to be, but they are not ſure even of that. ſome ſecret whiſpers within make them, whether they will or not, tremble at the apprehenſions of another ſtate; neither their tinſel-wit, nor ſuperficial learning, nor their impotent aſſaults upon the weak ſide, as they think of religion, nor the boldeſt notions of impiety, will hold them up then. of all

which I now preſent ſo lively an inſtance, as perhaps hiſtory can ſcarce parallel.

Here were parts ſo exalted by nature, and improved by ſtudy, and yet ſo corrupted and debaſed by irreligion and vice, that he who was made to be one of the glories of his age was become a proverb, and, if his repentance had not interpoſed, would have been one of the greateſt reproaches of it. he knew well the ſmall ſtrength of that weak cauſe, and at firſt deſpiſed, but afterwards abhorred it. he felt the miſchiefs, and ſaw the madneſs of it; and therefore though he lived to the ſcandal of many, he died as much to the edification of all thoſe that ſaw him; and becauſe they were but a ſmall number, he deſired that he might even when dead, yet ſpeak. he was willing nothing ſhould be concealed that might caſt reproach on himſelf, and on ſin, and offer up glory to God and religion. ſo that though he lived a hainous ſinner, yet he died a moſt examplary penitent.

It would be a vain and ridiculous inference, for any from hence to draw arguments about the abſtruſe ſecrets of predeſtination; and to conclude, that if they are of the number of the elect, they may live as they will, and that divine grace will at ſome time or other violently conſtrain them, and irreſiſtably work upon them. but as St. Paul was called to that eminent ſervice for which he was appointed, in ſo ſtupendous a manner, as is no warrant for others to expect ſuch a vocation; ſo, if upon ſome ſignal occaſions ſuch converſions fall out, which, how far they are ſhort of miracles, I ſhall not determine, it is not only a vain but a pernicious ima-

gination, for any to go on in their ill ways, upon a fond conceit and expectation that the like will befal them: for whatſoever God's extraordinary dealings with ſome may be, we are ſure his common way of working is by offering theſe things to our rational faculties, which by the aſſiſtance of his grace if we improve them all we can, ſhall be certainly effectual for our reformation; and if we neglect or abuſe theſe, we put ourſelves beyond the common methods of God's mercy, and have no reaſon to expect that wonders ſhould be wrought for our conviction; which though they ſometimes happen, that they may give an effectual allarm for the awaking of others, yet it would deſtroy the whole deſign of religion, if men ſhould depend upon or look for ſuch an extraordinary and forcible operation of God's grace.

And I hope that thoſe who have had ſome ſharp reflections on their paſt life, ſo as to be reſolved to forſake their ill courſes, will not take the leaſt encouragement to themſelves in that deſperate and unreaſonable reſolution of putting off their repentance till they can ſin no longer, from the hopes I have expreſſed of this Lord's obtaining mercy at the laſt; and from thence preſume, that they alſo ſhall be received, when they turn to God on their death-beds: for what mercy ſoever God may ſhew to ſuch as really were never inwardly touched before that time; yet there is no reaſon to think that thoſe who have dealt ſo diſingenuouſly with God and their own ſouls, as deſignedly to put off their turning to him, upon ſuch conſidera-

tions, ſhould be then accepted with him. they may die ſuddenly, or by a diſeaſe that may ſo diſorder their underſtandings, that they ſhall not be in any capacity of reflecting on their paſt lives. the inward converſion of our minds is not ſo in our power, that it can be effected without Divine grace aſſiſting. and there is no reaſon for thoſe who have neglected theſe aſſiſtances all their lives, to expect them in ſo extraordinary manner at their death. nor can one, eſpecially in a ſickneſs, that is quick and critical, be able to do thoſe things that are often indiſpenſibly neceſſary to make his repentance compleat: and even in a longer diſeaſe in which there are larger opportunities for theſe things; yet there is great reaſon to doubt of a repentance begun and kept up merely by terror, and not from any ingenuous principle. in which, though I will not take on me to limit the mercies of God, which are boundleſs; yet this muſt be confeſſed, that to delay repentance, with ſuch a deſign, is to put the greateſt concernment we have upon the moſt dangerous and deſperate iſſue that is poſſible.

But they that will ſtill go on in their ſins, and be ſo partial to them, as to uſe all endeavours to ſtrengthen themſelves in their evil courſes, even by theſe very things which the providence of God ſets before them, for the caſting down theſe ſtrong holds of ſin: what is to be ſaid to ſuch? it is to be feared, that if they obſtinately perſiſt, they will by degrees come within that curſe, 'he that is unjuſt, let him be unjuſt ſtill: and he that is filthy,

'let him be filthy ſtill. but if our goſpel is hid, it
'is hid to them that are loſt, in whom the God of
'this world hath blinded the minds of them which
'believe not, leſt the light of the glorious goſpel of
'Chriſt, who is the image of God, ſhould ſhine unto
'them.'

FINIS.

A further account of the Earl of ROCHESTER, *as it was delivered in a funeral-ſermon, preached at his deſire, by Mr.* PARSONS, *chaplain to his mother, the Counteſs of* ROCHESTER.

UPON my firſt viſit to him, (May 26.) juſt at his return from his journey out of the weſt, he moſt gladly received me, ſhew'd me extraordinary reſpects upon the ſcore of mine office, 'thanked 'God, who had in mercy and good providence ſent 'me to him, who ſo much needed my prayers and 'counſels; acknowledging how unworthily here-'tofore he had treated that order of men, reproach-'ing them that they were proud, and propheſied 'only for rewards; but now he had learnt how to 'value them; that he eſteemed them the ſervants 'of the moſt high God, who were to ſhew to him 'the way to everlaſting life.'

At the ſame time I found him labouring under ſtrange trouble and conflicts of mind, his ſpirit wounded, and his conſcience full of terrors. upon his journey he told me, 'he had been arguing with 'greater vigour againſt God and religion, than ever 'he had done in his life-time before, and that he 'was reſolved to run them down with all the argu-'ment and ſpite in the world, but,' like the great convert St. Paul, 'he found it hard to kick a-

'gainſt the pricks.' for God at that time had ſo ſtruck his heart by his immediate hand, that preſently he argued as ſtrongly for God and virtue, as before he had done againſt it. that God ſtrangely opened his heart, creating in his mind moſt awful and tremendous thoughts and ideas of the Divine Majeſty, with a delightful contemplation of the Divine Nature and Attributes, and of the lovelineſs of religion and virtue. 'I never (ſaid he) was advanced thus far towards happineſs in my life before, 'tho' upon the commiſſion of ſome ſins extraordinary, I have had ſome checks and warnings conſiderable from within, but ſtill ſtruggled with them, and ſo wore them off again. the moſt obſervable that I remember was this: one day at an atheiſtical meeting, at a perſon of quality's, I undertook to manage the cauſe, and was the principal diſputant againſt God and piety, and for my performances, received the applauſe of the whole company; upon which my mind was terribly ſtruck, and I immediately applyed thus to myſelf. good God! that a man that walks upright, that ſees the wonderful works of God, and has the uſe of his ſenſes and reaſon, ſhould uſe them to the defying of his Creator! but tho' this was a good beginning towards my converſion, to find my conſcience touched for my ſins, yet it went off again; nay, all my life long, I had a ſecret value and reverence for an honeſt man, and loved morality in others. but I had formed an odd ſcheme of religion to myſelf, which would ſolve all that God and conſcience might force upon me; yet I was not

'ever well reconciled to the buſineſs of Chriſtianity, nor had that reverence for the goſpel of Chriſt as I 'ought to have.' which eſtate of mind continued, till the liii. chapter of Iſaiah was read to him, (wherein there is a lively deſcription of the ſufferings of our Saviour, and the benefits thereof) and ſome other portions of ſcripture; by the power and efficacy of which word, aſſiſted by his Holy Spirit, God ſo wrought upon his heart, that he declared, 'that 'the myſteries of the paſſion appeared ſo clear and 'plain to him, as ever any thing did that was repre-'ſented in a glaſs:" ſo that the joy and admiration, which poſſeſſed his ſoul upon reading God's word to him, was remarkable to all about him; and he had ſo much delight in his teſtimonies, that in my abſence, he begged his mother and lady to read the ſame to him frequently, and was unſatisfied (notwithſtanding his great pains and weakneſs) till he had learned eſpecially the liii. of Iſaiah without book.

At the ſame time, diſcourſing of his manner of life from his youth up, and which all men knew was too much devoted to the 'ſervice of ſin,' and that the 'luſts of the fleſh, of the eye, and the pride of 'life,' had captivated him: he was very large and particular in his acknowledgments about it, more ready to accuſe himſelf than I or any one elſe can be; publickly crying out, 'O bleſſed God, can ſuch 'a horrid creature as I am be accepted by thee, who 'has deny'd thy being, and contemned thy power? 'asking often, can there be mercy and pardon for 'me? will God own ſuch a wretch as I?' and in the

middle of his ſickneſs ſaid, 'ſhall the unſpeakable 'joys of heaven be conferred on me? O mighty Sa-'viour! never, but thro' thine infinite love and 'ſatisfaction! O never, but by the purchaſe of thy 'blood!' adding, 'that with all abhorrency he did 'reflect upon his former life; that ſincerely, and 'from his heart, he did repent of all that folly and 'madneſs which he had committed.'

Indeed he had a true and lively ſenſe of God's great mercy to him in ſtriking his hard heart, and laying his conſcience open, which hitherto was deaf to all God's calls and methods; ſaying, 'if that 'God, who died for great as well as leſſer ſinners, 'did not ſpeedily apply his infinite merits to his poor 'ſoul, his wound was ſuch as no man could conceive 'or bear;' crying out, 'that he was the vileſt 'wretch and dog that the ſun ſhined upon, or the 'earth bore; that now he ſaw his error in not li-'ving up to that reaſon which God endued him with, 'and which he unworthily vilify'd and contemned;' wiſhed he 'had been a ſtarving leper crawling in 'a ditch;' that he 'had been a link-boy or a beg-'gar, or for his whole life-time confined to a dun-'geon, rather than thus to have ſinned againſt his 'God.'

How remarkable was his faith, in a hearty embracing and devout confeſſion of all the articles of our chriſtian religion, and all the divine myſteries of the goſpel? ſaying, 'that that abſurd and fooliſh 'philoſophy, which the world ſo much admired, 'propagated by the late Mr. Hobbs, and others, 'had undone him, and many more of the beſt parts

'in the nation;' who, without God's great mercy to them, may never, I believe, attain ſuch a repentance.

I muſt not omit to mention his faithful adherence to, and caſting himſelf entirely upon, the mercies of Jeſus Chriſt, and the free grace of God, declared to repenting ſinners through him; with a thankful remembrance of his life, death, and reſurrection; begging 'God to ſtrengthen his faith,' and often crying out, 'Lord, I believe, help thou mine 'unbelief.'

His mighty love and eſteem of the holy ſcriptures, his reſolutions to read them frequently, and meditate upon them, if God ſhould ſpare him, having already taſted the good word; for having ſpoken to his heart, he acknowledged, 'all the ſeeming ab-'ſurdities and contradictions thereof, fancied by 'men of corrupt and reprobate judgments, were 'vaniſhed, and the excellency and beauty appeared, 'being come to receive the truth, in the love of it.

His extraordinary fervent devotions, and his own frequent prayers, were moſt excellent and correct; amongſt the reſt, for the king, in ſuch a manner as became a dutiful ſubject, and a truly grateful ſervant; for the church and nation, for ſome particular relations, and then for all men; his calling frequently upon me at all hours to pray with him, or read the ſcriptures to him; and towards the end of his ſickneſs, would heartily deſire 'God to par-'don his infirmities, if he ſhould not be ſo wakeful 'and intent through the whole duty as he wiſhed 'to be;' and that 'tho' the fleſh was weak, yet the

'ſpirit was willing; and hoped God would accept 'that.'

His continual invocation of God's grace, and holy ſpirit to ſuſtain him, to keep him from all evil thoughts, from all temptations and Diabolical ſuggeſtions, and every thing which might be prejudicial to that religious temper of mind, which God had now ſo happily endued him withal, crying out, one night eſpecially, 'how terribly the tempter did 'aſſault him, by caſting upon him leud and wicked i-'maginations, but I thank God (ſaid he) I abhor them 'all, and by the power of his grace, which I am ſure 'is ſufficient for me, I have overcome them; it is 'the malice of the devil, becauſe I am reſcued from 'him; and the goodneſs of God, that frees me from 'all my ſpiritual enemies.'

His great joy at his lady's converſion from Popery to the church of England (being as he termed it, 'a 'faction ſupported only by fraud and cruelty)' which was by her done with deliberation and mature judgment; the dark miſts of which having been for ſome months before breaking away, were now cleared, by her receiving the bleſſed ſacrament with her dying husband, at the receiving of which no man could expreſs more joy and devotion than he did; and having experienced the word of life, and ſeen the ſalvation of God, in the preparation of his mind, he was now ready 'to depart in peace.'

His hearty concern for the pious education of his children, wiſhing that his ſon might never be a wit, that is, (as he himſelf explained it) 'one of thoſe 'wretched creatures, who pride themſelves in abuſ-

'ing God and religion, denying his being, or his 'providence, but that he might become an honeſt 'and religious man, which could only be the ſup-'port and bleſſing of his family; complaining what 'a vitious and naughty world they were brought 'into, and that no fortunes or honours were com-'parable to the love and favour of God to them,' in whoſe name he bleſſed them, and prayed for them, and committed them to his protection.

His ſtrict charge to thoſe perſons, in whoſe cuſtody his papers were, 'to burn all his prophane and 'leud writings, as being only fit to promote vice 'and immorality, by which he had ſo highly of-'fended God, and ſhamed and blaſphemed that ho-'ly religion into which he had been baptized; and 'all his obſcene and filthy pictures, which were ſo 'notoriouſly ſcandalous.'

His readineſs to make reſtitution to the utmoſt of his power to all perſons whom he had injured; and for thoſe whom he could not make a compenſation to, he prayed for God's and their pardons. his remarkable juſtice in taking all poſſible care for the payment of his debts, which, before, he confeſſed he had not ſo fairly and effectually done.

His readineſs to forgive all injuries done againſt him, ſome more particularly mentioned, which were great and provoking; nay annexing thereto all the aſſurance of a future friendſhip, and hoping he ſhould be as freely forgiven at the hand of God.

How tender and concerned was he for his ſervants about him in his extremities, (manifeſted by the beneficence of his will to them) pitying their

troubles in watching with him, and attending him, treating them with candor and kindneſs, as if they had been his intimates!

How hearty were his endeavours to be ſerviceable to thoſe about him, exhorting them to 'the 'fear and love of God, and to make a good uſe of 'his forbearance and long-ſuffering to ſinners, which 'ſhould lead them to repentance.' and here I muſt not paſs by his pious and moſt paſſionate exclamation to a gentleman of ſome character, who came to viſit him upon his death-bed: 'O remember that 'you contemn God no more, he is an avenging 'God, and will viſit you for your ſins, he will in 'mercy, I hope, touch your conſcience ſooner or 'later as he has done mine; you and I have been 'friends and ſinners together a great while, there-'fore I am the more free with you: we have been 'all miſtaken in our conceits and opinions, our 'perſwaſions have been falſe and groundleſs, there-'fore God grant you repentance.' And ſeeing him the next day again, he ſaid to him, 'perhaps you 'were diſobliged by my plainneſs to you yeſterday; 'I ſpoke the words of truth and ſoberneſs to you,' (and ſtriking his hand upon his breaſt) ſaid, 'I hope 'God will touch your heart.'

Likewiſe his commands to me, 'to preach a-'broad, and to let all men know, (if they knew it not already) 'how ſeverely God had diſciplined him 'for his ſins by his afflicting hand; that his ſuffer-'ings were moſt juſt, tho' he had laid ten thouſand 'times more upon him; how he had laid one ſtripe 'upon another becauſe of his grievous provocations,

'till he had brought him home to himself; that in 'his former visitations, he had not that blessed ef- 'fect he was now sensible of. he had formerly some 'loose thoughts and slight resolutions of reforming, 'and designed to be better, because even the present 'consequences of sin were still pestering him, and 'were so troublesome and inconvenient to him; 'but that now he had other sentiments of things, 'and acted upon other principles.'

His willingness to die if it pleased God, 'resign- 'ing himself always to the divine disposal; but if 'God should spare him yet a longer time here, he 'hoped to bring glory to the name of God, in the 'whole course of his life, and particularly by his indea- 'vours to convince others, and to assure them of 'the danger of their condition, if they continued 'impenitent, and how graciously God had dealt 'with him.'

His great sense of his obligations to those excel- lent men, the Right Reverend my Lord Bishop of Oxford, and Dr. MARSHALL for their charitable and frequent visits to him, and prayers with him; and Dr. BURNET, who came on purpose from London to see him, who were all very serviceable to his re- pentance.

His extraordinary duty and reverence to his mother, with all the grateful respects to her imagi- nable, and kindness to his good lady, beyond ex- pression, (which may well enhance such a loss to them) and to his children, obliging them with all the endearments that a good husband or tender fa- ther could bestow.

To conclude these remarks, I shall only read to

you his dying remonſtrance, ſufficiently atteſted, and ſigned by his own hand, as his trueſt ſenſe, (which I hope may be uſeful to that good end he deſigned it) in manner and form following.

'FOR the benefit of all thoſe whom I may have 'drawn into ſin by my example and encou-'ragement, I leave to the world this my laſt decla-'ration, which I deliver in the preſence of the great 'God, who knows the ſecrets of all hearts, and be-'fore whom I am now appearing to be judged.'

'That from the bottom of my ſoul I deteſt and 'abhor the whole courſe of my former wicked life, 'that I think I can never ſufficiently admire the 'goodneſs of God, who has given me a true ſenſe of 'my pernicious opinions and vile practices, by 'which I have hitherto lived without hope, and 'without God in the world; have been an open 'enemy to Jeſus Chriſt, doing the utmoſt deſpite to 'the Holy Spirit of Grace. and that the greateſt 'teſtimony of my charity to ſuch is, to warn them in 'the name of God, and as they regard the welfare of 'their immortal ſouls, no more to deny his being, or 'his providence, or deſpiſe his goodneſs; no more 'to make a mock of ſin, or contemn the pure and 'excellent religion of my ever bleſſed Redeemer, 'through whoſe merits alone, I, one of the greateſt 'ſinners, do yet hope for mercy and forgiveneſs. 'Amen.'

Declared and ſigned in the preſence of { *Anne Rocheſter.* *Robert Parſons.* *June* 19. 1680.

J. ROCHESTER.

And now I cannot but mention with joy and admiration that ſteddy temper of mind, which he enjoyed thro' the whole courſe of his ſickneſs and repentance; which muſt proceed, not from a hurry and perturbation of mind or body, ariſing from the fear of death, or dread of hell only, but from an ingenuous love to God, and an uniform regard to virtue, (ſuitable to that ſolemn declaration of his, 'I 'would not commit the leaſt ſin to gain a kingdom') will all poſſible ſymptoms of a laſting perſeverance in it, if God ſhould have reſtored him. to which might be added, his comfortable perſuaſions of God's accepting him to his mercy, ſaying three or four days before his death, 'I ſhall die, but O, what un-'ſpeakable glories do I ſee! what joys, beyond 'thought or expreſſion, am I ſenſible of! I am aſ-'ſured of God's mercy to me through Jeſus Chriſt. 'O how I long to die, and be with my Saviour!'

The time of his ſickneſs and repentance was juſt nine weeks; in all which time he was ſo much maſter of his reaſon, and had ſo clear an underſtanding, (ſaving 30 hours, about the middle of it, in which he was delirious) that he never dictated or ſpoke more compoſed in his life: and therefore if any ſhall continue to ſay, his piety was the effect of madneſs or vapours; let me tell them, it is highly diſingenuous, and that the aſſertion is as ſilly as it is wicked. and moreover that the force of what I have delivered may not be evaded by wicked men, who are reſolved to harden their hearts, maugre all convictions, by ſaying, 'this thing was done in a corner;' I appeal for the truth thereof, to all ſorts of perſons,

who in conſiderable numbers viſited and attended him, and more particularly to thoſe eminent phyſicians who were near him, and converſant with him in the whole courſe of his tedious ſickneſs; and who, if any, are competent judges of a phrenſy or delirium.

There are many more excellent things in my abſence, which have occaſionally dropt from his mouth, that will not come within the narrow compaſs of a ſermon; but theſe, I hope, will ſufficiently prove what I produce them for. and if any ſhall be ſtill unſatisfied herein in this hard-hearted generation, it matters not, let them at their coſt be unbelievers ſtill.

FINIS.

24 DE 58

35